Stone Soup Community Development:

Sustainability and AmeriCorp*VISTA Projects

Corporation for National Service

Created in 1993, the Corporation for National Service oversees three national service initiatives - AmeriCorps, which includes AmeriCorps*VISTA, AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps, and hundreds of local and national nonprofits; Learn and Serve America, which provides models and assistance to help teachers integrate service and learning from kindergarten through college; and the National Senior Service Corps, which includes the Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

National Service Fellowship Program

The National Service Fellowship Program, launched by the Corporation for National Service in September 1997, involves a team of individual researchers who develop and promote models of quality service responsive to the needs of communities. The goal of the program is to strengthen national service through continuous learning, new models, strong networks, and professional growth.
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for the past nine months, my wholehearted thanks and a promise to put the laptop away for awhile and find a job with a dental plan.

Most importantly, thank you to the many informants who made this project possible. Your willingness to share your VISTA experience and service wisdom with me and future VISTA generations is greatly appreciated.

This project is dedicated to Diana London who sustained VISTA from its infancy into adulthood and to her past, present and future VISTAs; may you always have a peddler's stone in your pocket and may the soup always be hearty.

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Abstract

The Stone Soup Sustainability research project is an evaluation of how AmeriCorps*VISTA (VISTA) projects address continuity and viability. The research examines what elements are important to a project's sustainability and what resources are needed to improve efforts for stakeholders (Corporation for National Service staff, VISTA supervisors, VISTA Leaders and members). Using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, stakeholders were interviewed and asked how they defined a successful project, what strategies they used to develop such a project and what tools would be useful to them. From these findings, the Stone Soup Sustainability series was developed. The series includes a supervisor's guide to developing sustainability workplans, a sustainability training module, and a sustainability workbook for members. Additionally, three programming and policy recommendations are outlined at the end of the paper: a National Service Collaboration, training and technical assistance for members and supervisors and increasing sustainability awareness within the AmeriCorps*VISTA community.

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Executive Summary

In the story Stone Soup a peddler arrives in a village in famine looking for a meal. Told by a villager that the local people are hoarding their food the peddler declares that he'll make stone soup. The peddler goes to the center of the village, puts water in a kettle and drops in a stone. The villagers watch for a while and when curiosity and hunger get the better of them they go to their cabinets and bring out the best that they have to share and put it into the kettle. A wonderful community meal is made with the peddler contributing only a stone to the process. The story of stone soup and the role the peddler plays in making a community meal is much like the role a VISTA plays in their host communities. VISTAs tackle challenging issues armed only with their optimism and willingness to serve. This project looks at what the role a peddler plays in community development and identifies ways communities continue to make soup once their peddler has left their village.

The Stone Soup Sustainability Research Project is an evaluation of AmeriCorps*VISTA programs address continuance. The research examines what elements are important to a project's sustainability and what resources are needed to improve programming and planning efforts for stakeholders (Corporation for National Service staff, VISTA supervisors and VISTA Leaders and members). The goal of the project is to develop useful resource material to assist those in the field increase their awareness of sustainability and provide resource material to help them develop and integrate sustainability action plan into their projects.

Methodology
Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology design, forty-eight stakeholders: VISTA alumni (n=11), Corporation field staff (n=12), Corporation headquarters staff (n=5), VISTA supervisors (n=9), VISTAs and VISTA Leaders (n=11) were interviewed and asked how they defined a sustainable project, what strategies they used to develop such a project and what sustainability tools would be useful to them. The series has been field tested at four trainings, two with VISTA Leaders, one with VISTA supervisors and one cross-stream training. All clusters were represented in the interviewee pool.

Once the interviews were completed, they were transcribed and the data was analyzed "identifying, coding, and categorizing primary patterns in the data" (Patton, 1990; 381). The data analysis was inductive and common themes and strategies "emerged" from the data collected. Three common themes were identified in the data. The first major finding was that in projects that were sustained there was a lack of a shared vision of what sustainability means for a VISTA project on the part of the state office and host site. There were three common programming elements in projects that were sustained: secure funding, strong staffing/volunteer base and a clear communication strategy. These programs also tended to have thorough orientation programs, on-going training opportunities and transition strategies for their members. The second major theme was there was a need for community development training material that addresses the unique role and responsibilities a VISTA plays in a host community. The third theme was a lack of understanding of how to incorporate sustainability issues into project workplans.

Field Testing and Reviewers
The Stone Soup Series was field tested at four trainings. First in San Diego with VISTA Leaders (n=75), then in Albany with VISTA supervisors (n=15), at a cross-stream training in Juneau (n=22) and at a VISTA Leaders training in Washington, DC (n=40). All informants were given the option to exclude any portion of the interview that they did not want included in the research. Appendix one through three are the guides developed for the interviews. Appendix four is the fact sheet informants were asked to read before the interview and Appendix five is the consent form informants were asked to sign. Preliminary feedback and evaluations from these trainings were positive, and five participants have followed up to say that they used the Stone Soup series to train on sustainability issues at their host site. Additionally, four VISTA Leaders have adapted the material to train VISTAs on their project as well as supervisors.

Twenty-two people were invited to review drafts of the series. Reviewers include current members, national service training and technical assistance providers as well as Corporation field and headquarter staff. The Stone Soup series was revised based on suggestions made during training evaluations as well as recommendations from reviewers.

Stone Soup Sustainability Series

Three products were developed to reflect the findings from the research:

- **Stone Soup Training Module: Sustaining the AmeriCorps*VISTA Experience.** Includes eleven sustainability skill building activities to help new VISTAs understand how to develop and implement sustainable programs. The module is designed to be conducted on-site and facilitated by VISTA supervisors or VISTA Leaders. Activities include community development creative problem solving, "Wisdom from the Field": a collection of suggestions from VISTA alumni, and how to write a sustainable action plan. Located in appendix seven

- **Stone Soup Sustainability: A Guide to Developing AmeriCorps*VISTA Workplans,** provides VISTA supervisors with tools and templates to develop a workplan for their AmeriCorps*VISTA project. The guidebook includes member orientation suggestions, tips on writing sustainability into the workplan and composite stories of programs where the projects was sustained and one where it was not. Located in appendix eight

- **Making Soup from a Stone: A Sustainability Workbook for AmeriCorps*VISTA Members,** is designed to help VISTAs collect and organize important project and community information so that it can be passed on to successors. The workbook includes project and community orientation checklists, local and national resource material and training suggestions. Located in appendix nine.

Policy Recommendations

Three programming and policy recommendations are outlined at the end of the report. The recommendations are designed to help Corporation staff increase their awareness of sustainability issues and provide concrete suggestions for ways to incorporate sustainability into their programming and policy work.

- **National Service Collaboration.** The collaboration concept proposes a streamlined, coordinated process for communities to apply for national service funding and to use these resources effectively. The collaboration uses several streams of services building off the strengths and resources each stream brings to

community development. An example of a possible collaboration is outlined in the recommendation.

• **Training and Technical Assistance.** Suggestions for technical assistance delivered on-line and through a toll-free phone number and train-the-trainer sessions to increase the on-site training capacity of supervisors and VISTA Leaders is explored in this recommendation.

• **Sustainability Awareness.** A proposed sustainability agreement between host site and state office is outlined and the addition of a sustainability question to Part B of the VISTA grant application is proposed.

Summary

Creating a sustainable VISTA project ensures that a legacy of service is left with the host community. Sustainability of a VISTA project means that a community has been educated about the goals of the project, involved in program development and feels a sense of ownership in the project's success. A sustainable project represents a community that is engaged in the VISTA process and is committed to continuing the work initiated by the VISTA. If the goal of this research project is met then this material can be used to help polish the stones that VISTAs place in kettles across the country thereby improving the quality of care and service they provide and helping to creating sustainable projects.

Summary of Findings

The footprint I want to leave in my community is to do as much as I can with all that I have. To never give up the fight for justice and truth. To help those follow their dreams in places where dreams are few. This may seem like a lot, but I have a life to do this or at least try. But for Team Tech I want my community to know I did the best I could for them and help them help others.

<div align="right">~Juan F. Saenz, VISTA</div>

The primary goal of this project was to conduct an evaluation that would yield resource material for the stakeholders. Below are the research criteria set out for the project. The criteria encompass the philosophical grounding of Greene, House and Schwandt, the research desires of the informants, as well as my own expectations for the research, namely that it be practical, accessible and useful to the VISTA community. These criterion are based, in part, on criteria developed for a previous project on rural poverty (Bonn, 2000: 22).

Action-Oriented Criteria

- *Trusted Delegate.* Research that tells the story of the stakeholders in a dignified, representative manner and that respects and protects stakeholders who helped with the research.

- *Sustainable.* Research that is usable, practical and endurable.

- *Dialogic.* Research that promotes discussion and suggests formats/venues for this discussion to take place.

- *Credible.* Research that is accepted and applicable in the policy, advocacy, client and service communities.

With these criteria in mind, the Stone Soup Sustainability Series was created from the collective experience, wisdom and reflections of people from the VISTA community. The Series was developed to address the challenges host sites and VISTAs face when trying to integrate sustainability issues into their projects. The Stone Soup Series captures best practices from projects around the country and lists lessons learned from experienced VISTA practitioners. Each piece in the series was developed for a particular stakeholder group and provides suggestions, templates and resource listings on how to integrate sustainability into a VISTA project. The major themes that the series addresses are

• The importance of discussing the programming elements that go in to creating a sustainable project and the effect that a sustainable project can have upon a community.

• The opposite of the first theme is what happens if a project fails? How does a project that isn't sustained affect funding, trust levels and program development for the host site, the community and the VISTA?

• The unique community development role that a VISTA plays. As one-year community developers, VISTAs' roles and responsibilities are different from their staff counterparts.

• The workplan as planning basis for sustainability. The workplan should outline steps to integrate sustainability into project planning and implementation from the project application phase through the completion of the project.

• Many of the successful, sustainable projects had organized project data collection systems. These systems contributed to the successful transitioning of the project form VISTA to non-VISTA resources.

• The projects with comprehensive orientation programs, on-going training opportunities and member development opportunities yielded better program results and tended to have a higher retention rate.

These findings are explored in-depth and suggestions for ways VISTAs and VISTA supervisors can include these sustainability strategies in their projects are outlined in the Stone Soup Series. A brief summary of the contents of each of the pieces in the series follows. The complete series, the formal findings for the research project, can be found in the Appendix.

Stone Soup Training Module: Sustaining the AmeriCorps*VISTA Experience
The training manual is a train-the-trainer opportunity for returning VISTAs, VISTA Leaders, and VISTA supervisors to train new VISTAs, on-site, about sustainability. The module looks at sustainability in terms of creating a sustainable project as well as creating sustainable VISTAs (people who will continue volunteering after their term is completed). The module helps define what sustainability means for VISTA projects, looks at the connection between the workplan, the host site and community and the VISTAs, and provides examples of what happens in a community where sustainability is achieved and one where sustainability is not achieved. The "Wisdom from the Field" activity provides VISTAs with tips about how to build trust within their new community. The main activity of the module focuses in on developing a long-range sustainability plan for the VISTA project. VISTAs are asked to write a sustainability statement of their project, identify stakeholders to help them with the project as well as outline project tasks. This activity reinforces the idea that a VISTA must always have other people involved with their project who have project buy-in and who will know how to run the program when the VISTA is no longer there. The last activity in the module is a visioning activity for VISTAs. The goal of this activity is to help VISTAs identify what they want to accomplish during their service year both personally and professionally. The training module is in appendix seven.

Stone Soup Sustainability: A Guide to Developing AmeriCorps*VISTA Workplans
The sustainability guide looks at the three important elements of building a sustainable project: the host site, the workplan and the VISTA. A chapter is devoted to each of these elements and strategic planning strategies are delineated.

The host site section focuses in on how to prepare a community and a host organization for a VISTA, the importance of establishing a project and personal support network for the incoming VISTAs and how to create organizational and community buy-in to the VISTA project.

The workplan section outlines the stages of a typical grant year, describes appropriate workplan assignments for VISTAs, discusses how to write the goals and objectives section of the grant application and explains how to incorporate evaluation in the project.

The VISTA portion the guide looks at the four stages associated with a typical VISTA service year: the orientation stage, the acclimation stage, the production and implementation stage and the sustaining stage. This portion of the Guide also provides supervisors with a list of ideas of how to motivate and retain their VISTAs. The complete guide is in appendix eight.

Making Soup from a Stone: A Sustainability Workbook for AmeriCorps*VISTA Members

The workbook is composed of a series of checklists of community and organizational information to help VISTAs capture and organize important information. The workbook is formatted to be downloaded from the web, put in a three-ring binder and supplemented with project-specific material. Checklists include community contacts, volunteer development material, grants and funding opportunities, training opportunities, sample media material and transition information. A copy of the workbook can be found in appendix nine.

As a researcher, part of the project process included reflecting upon my own service experience and how I felt my ethic of service has changed over the years. Appendix six is an essay, **The Pebble in the Pond: Social Justice Action** which explores the question of what motivates people to take action on social justice issues and the role VISTA can play in the process.

Recommendations

The footprint I want to leave in my community will be through the footprints of my children. I'm raising future volunteers, activists and pilgrims through which my footsteps, and others, will be remembered and new ones made.

~Cynthia S. Ralls, VISTA

Recommendation One: National Service Collaboration Commitment

Overview

Currently, the Corporation for National Service grants communities AmeriCorps*VISTAs for a term of three to five years. During this period members mobilize local resources to address systemic social problems. This framework affords communities across the United States the opportunity to create and implement strategies for community development. While this model has worked well, perhaps now, during a time of national service prosperity, it can be expanded to include additional streams of service. The collaboration would extend the length of the commitment that national service has in a community thereby increasing the likelihood of a project being sustained.

Given the expansion of national service programs over the last five years, the service support the Corporation can provide to a community is diverse. The Corporation is in a position to provide resources and talents that can extend the length and quality of their commitment. Taking the long-range view, ten years in the example outlined below in figure one to address challenging community concerns allows host organizations the ability to transition in and out of a member-built network, a National Service Collaboration Commitment (the collaboration).

Purpose

The purpose of the collaboration is to provide a streamlined, coordinated process for communities to apply for national service funding and to use these resources effectively. The collaboration uses several streams of services building off the strengths and resources each stream brings to community development. Because

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of the integrated, long-term network established, host organizations have the time to develop and implement new programs. The collaboration also provides the host organization time to identify transition strategies for their program to shift from national service resources to community networks.

Benefits

The benefit of establishing a collaboration is that a community builds a network based upon a vision of sustainability that it defined for itself. National service resources support these efforts by providing temporary staffing and technical service. The collaboration begins as a community-driven effort that makes a long-term commitment to challenging community issues. The collaboration model acknowledges the difficulty host national service organizations have in addressing systemic social concerns such as homelessness, hunger and literacy with a short-term, three-to-five year grant. The collaboration shifts this national service commitment by organizing and extending the resources expended in a community. The result of such a collaboration is that a host community and organization have the time to discuss, plan and identify and educate partners as well as time and support to transition from national service resources. A short-term vision is inappropriate when programming for the issues that national service supports. Providing the time and resources to help communities realize their vision for change is the catalyst role national service can play in the collaboration.

Stages of the Collaboration

For the purposes of illustrating how the collaboration works, Figure one outlines one possible iteration. In this example, a host community has requested assistance for ten years and identified six streams of service (RSVP, AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps*VISTA, NCCC, Promise Fellows and Education Only members) to address their issue. In other collaborations the streams of service, grant years and types of partnerships could differ according to community need and interest.

The collaboration uses a bell curve approach to national service resources. The stages outlined here are one way that these resources can be configured. It is important to note that host organizations and Corporation staff work together to determine what their definition of what a sustainable project is and what national

resources would be most helpful to the process. This collaboration is divided into four stages: the planning stage, the implementation stage, the transition stage and the community-sufficiency stage.

The Planning Stage

During the first two years of the collaboration, the planning stage, the partnership develops and conducts community assessments, drafts a long-range vision for the project, develops an evaluation plan and prepares for full-time members. This process gives the partnership an opportunity to create a solid collaboration with defined roles and responsibilities for each of the participating collaborators, train community members and future AmeriCorps supervisors, educate the community about what role national service members will play in addressing their specific community concern(s) and recruit qualified members to serve. During the planning stage community meetings are held to discuss the project, elicit resident feedback and engage community members in project planning and implementation.

The Implementation Stage

The next three years of the collaboration are the implementation years. During this stage, the partnership hosts full-time AmeriCorps members (AmeriCorps state and national as well as AmeriCorps*VISTAs). The members work fulltime to develop and implement the project as well as building community capacity so that the project has a sustainable network once the full-time members leave. Funding sources are identified in this stage and a long-range funding strategy for the program is developed. Also during this stage a mid-program evaluation is conducted to assess the program and its impact on the community.

The Transition Stage

During the third stage, the transition stage, national service resources are reduced to part time and volunteer members. The transition stage is a critical evaluation period for the project. Time, training and resources are allotted to identify best practices and lessons learned from the first two stages, and recommendations made about how the program can be improved. During this three-year period, members work with the host community to ensure that financial resources are secured and a solid volunteer base is in place.

The Community-Sufficiency Stage

The last two years of the collaboration comprise the community-sufficiency stage. During this period, the partnership has access to CNS resources (technical assistance providers and program officers) to provide project support and continue the evaluation process. The evaluation of the last two years of the collaboration would document what strategies the partnership used to sustain the program. These findings can be used to develop a series of project sustainability profiles and best practices training curriculum. During this final stage the partnership does not rely upon financial or staff resources from the Corporation.

Roles within the Collaboration

If collaboration between the streams of services can take place then individualized roles can be developed to enhance the programming capacity of partnership and the host community. For example, RSVP volunteers attend a community training where they can learn community assessment techniques, how to recruit and train national service members and program planning and evaluation methods. This strengthens the program design, staffing and evaluation of the collaboration. Additionally, training RSVP volunteers in these areas builds the capacity of other local organizations that work with RSVP programs.

With RSVP volunteers laying a solid groundwork for the program, the VISTA members who enter the collaboration during the third year have a community that is primed for the project they will set up. VISTAs can focus their efforts for the next three years on implementing the program, recruiting volunteers and staff to support the program, identifying funding support for the program and working with the partnership and community to chart what the program will look like over the next five years. This sets up a sustainable network in which the partnership and community have the resources and capacity to run the program without the need for national service resources.

NCCC members can assist with the big projects that develop during the program design. Projects such as building rehabilitation, which can be daunting and delay community initiatives, can be planned for and integrated into the collaboration.

Promise Fellows and AmeriCorps members could provide the direct service support portion of the project. Members would ensure a broad, trained, committed volunteer staff to maintain the projects. As these grants phase out, Educational Only award members can assume this role and help transition these responsibilities to the staff and community volunteers.

Following is one example of how a national service collaboration might look.

Example of National Service Collaboration Commitment[1]

Grant Year	Goal and Tasks	Community Resources and Streams of Service Used
Year One	1. Identify collaborators for the partnership. 2. Conduct a community needs and assets review. 3. Develop collaboration plan for community issue(s). 4. Hold community meetings. 5. Create an evaluation plan.	RSVP and host sites
Year Two	1. Educate community about project goals. 2. Develop program plan. 3. Recruit VISTAs. 4. Identify local, regional and national partnerships that can support project.	RSVP, host site, Community volunteers
Year Three	1. Develop foundation for program by identifying and training volunteers. 2. Conduct a media campaign on issue. 3. Apply for financial resources to support the project. 4. Pilot the proposed program.	VISTA Grant Year 1, RSVP, Community volunteers
Year Four	1. Implement and revise program. 2. Continue volunteer recruitment and training. 3. Continue funding applications. 4. Conduct volunteer training and identify lead trainers, recruiters and coordinators.	RSVP, VISTA Grant Year 2, AmeriCorps, NCCC, Community volunteers
Year Five	1. Conduct mid-program evaluation. 2. Collect and archive project data. 3. Outline long-range funding plan for the program. 4. Hire program and train staff/volunteers to take over program management. 5. Create project manuals for each program developed.	RSVP, VISTA Grant Year 3, AmeriCorps, CNS Evaluation Staff, Community volunteers
Year Six	1. Implement the long-range funding goals identified during year five. 2. Continue volunteer recruitment and training. 3. Re-visioning of program to address findings in evaluation.	Promise Fellows, Education Award only AC members, Community volunteers
Year Seven	1. Create volunteer-run committees for fundraising, media and volunteer management. 2. Develop a program plan for the next three years. 3. Conduct large community event to support project.	Promise Fellows, Education Award Only AC members, NCCC spike, Community volunteers
Year Eight	1. Maintain program. 2. Continue volunteer recruitment and fundraising efforts. 3. Fulfill program objectives as outlined in program plan developed in year seven.	RSVP, Community volunteers. Promise Fellows
Year Nine	1. Maintain program. 2. Continue volunteer recruitment and fundraising efforts. 3. Fulfill program objectives as outlined in program plan developed in year seven.	RSVP and Community volunteers
Year Ten	1. Celebration and recognition of program. 2. Evaluation of program by CNS. 3. Continuation of program as deemed appropriate by the partnership.	Community volunteers, CNS evaluation staff

Figure One

[1] The collaboration concept was generated from discussions with Mal Coles of the Massachusetts Corporation State Office.

Recommendation

Establish a national pilot program to test the effectiveness of the collaboration model. Possible outcomes of a pilot program include examples of community-based long-range planning, profiles of how different streams of service complement one another, lessons learned from community partnerships based on a long-term commitment to an issue, funding strategies for long-term projects, training curricula for national service community collaborations, and a higher degree of member project preparedness and effectiveness. The pilot program requires a strong evaluation component. A study comparing the sustainability rates of collaborative projects with traditional projects would likely yield helpful information to the Corporation's future program design and training delivery.

The benefits of the program are twofold: more effective use of national service resources and a higher rate of sustainable programs. Host communities and organizations who can count on a long-term commitment from a funder are in a much more secure position to develop effective plans. Host organizations can leverage both the grant length and amount provided by the Corporation to secure other funders to participate in the collaboration.

Summary

The collaboration ensures that national service resources are temporary and the community network permanent. As outlined here, the collaboration provides the partnership and community the time and resources to plan, host and transition out of national service programs. Acknowledging that the majority of the issues that national service programs address are complex and can't reasonably be resolved or permanently addressed over the course of a three-year grant, the collaboration provides the resources, training and combined community and national service talent to sustain long-term, community-driven change.

Recommendation Two: Sustainability Training and Technical Assistance

Overview

While attending trainings and reviewing evaluations from these trainings the need for on-time training and more on-site training opportunities became apparent. Many of the trainings brought out basic concerns such as roles and responsibilities of a VISTA, workplan goals and local resources. These fundamental issues should be addressed at the host site level. Additionally, in most states, the training for the supervisors, members and Leaders was different. Each group requires special training, but it is important that key messages such as sustainability are addressed with each of these groups. A coordinated sustainability training delivery process as well as on-time technical support would greatly enhance the viability of VISTA projects.

Purpose

A sustainability component added to each major CNS-sponsored trainings (pre-service, supervisor's, early service and the Leader's training) would ensure that key stakeholders learn about sustainability as a goal for VISTA projects as well as receive the tools and resources to help them build sustainability into their project planning. A consistent sustainability message supported by on going technical assistance and VISTA specific development tools would increase the stakeholder's awareness of the importance of sustainability as well as their commitment to developing a sustainable project.

Recommendations

Three training suggestions are outlined here to help increase the sustainability of VISTA projects.

- *Workplan Workshop.* During the early portion of the application process, a representative from the VISTA host site should participate in a state run workplan writing workshop. Part B of the project application would be used as the basis for the training and issues such as appropriate roles for a VISTA to play in an organization, writing goals and objectives, identifying helpful support resources for a project, volunteer recruitment and retention and sustainability should all

be addressed in the workshop. These trainings would ensure that sustainability is an identified as a priority during the earliest stages of the project. Additionally, this training ensures that the state office and host site agree upon what a viable, sustainable project is. This early exposure would also help increase the resource sharing that can take place between host sites and the state office.

• *Train-the-Trainer.* Most of the trainings conducted by CNS are generic in nature: resource development, volunteer recruitment, communication, etc. The sessions are critical to the success of a VISTA project but could be improved if on-site training was done before to the state or cluster run trainings. Developing on-site trainings which could be conducted by returning members, VISTA Leaders and/ or supervisor provide the VISTA with site-specific, timely training. Possible modules include conducting a community needs and asset assessment, marketing your message: working with local media, and the role of a VISTA in community development. Each of these sessions would be adapted to meet the unique needs of the host project and delivered in a timely manner to the members. Additionally, by developing the training skills of the supervisors, Leaders and returning members, CNS would provide a valuable professional development experience for these stakeholders.

• *On-time Technical Assistance.* Providing access to one-on-one technical assistance to members and supervisors is a key sustainability element that CNS can provide to its host sites. CNS has the ability to coordinate experts in the fields of fundraising, literacy, volunteer management, homelessness, etc. to provide program assistance to stakeholders. This technical assistance can be provided electronically through e-mail exchanges or by a toll free number. Additionally, CNS could broker its position as a national funder and work with other government and nonprofit organizations such as Housing and Urban Development, Literacy Volunteers of America and the National Alliance to End Homelessness to host teleconferences and online forums to discuss upcoming Request for Proposals, grant programs and policies affecting nonprofits and their programs.

Summary

These recommendations serve to coordinate sustainability efforts. By starting the grant process with a shared vision and supporting this vision through on-time training and technical assistance CNS helps to build the capacity of the host site, stakeholders. This type of planning increases the probability that the program will be sustained and the member has a positive service experience.

Recommendation Three: Sustainability Awareness

Overview

When asked to define what constitutes a sustainable project, few stakeholders could articulate a clear vision of what that entails. Sustainability was used as a funding word, but when asked what concrete programmatic steps should be taken to ensure a project's sustainability, most stakeholders could not identify specific strategies. While a generic, institutionalized definition of AmeriCorps*VISTA project sustainability is not called for, a movement from semantics to action is necessary. Rather than using sustainability as a buzz word during funding rounds and in trainings, discussions should be initiated between Corporation state offices and their grantees as well as between Corporation headquarter and field staff.

Benefits

Beginning the grant process with a vision of what the program will look like at the end of the VISTA grant establishes a sustainability mindset. Beginning with the end in mind ensures that the host site is planning how to sustain the project throughout the grant period, not just during the final months.

The sustainability agreement outlines key sustainability questions (resource, staffing, networks and project preparation) so that the host site and Corporation state office are literally "on the same page." Starting with sustainability builds an awareness of and commitment to what the long-range vision for the project is. With this shared vision the Corporation is in a better position to support and evaluate the progress of the project.

Recommendation

An interim sustainability agreement to be used by the state office and the host site is included here. The questions in the agreement help the host site designate specific resources and actions needed to ensure the sustainability of the VISTA project. The agreement should be drafted by the applying host site and reviewed and revised in conjunction with the state office. If the agreement yields pertinent information and becomes a useful planning tool for the VISTA grant process, it could eventually be incorporated into Part B of the VISTA application.

Sustainability Agreement

1. Describe the process of how VISTAs will plan and implement a sustainable project for your organization.
2. Who on the host organization's staff, board and in the community will be following the progress of the project?
3. What funding sources will support the project?
4. How will the project's success and sustainability be evaluated?
5. In what areas could the Corporation state office be helpful in building a sustainable project?
6. Describe how the project will sustain itself once the VISTA grant is over?

Pre-VISTA Arrival Checklist

Orientation program (please attach)

On-site training plan (please attach)

Housing options identified (if needed)

Office space, supplies, computer, Internet and phone access assigned to VISTA(s)

Emergency loan fund established

Advisory board and/or mentors for VISTAs (please list names)

Workplan has been reviewed and agreed upon by all of the parties listed below

_____   _____

Corporation for National Service Representative   Date

_____   _____

Host Site Supervisor   Date

_____   _____

Board President of the Host Organization   Date

_____   _____

AmeriCorps*VISTA Member   Date

Conclusion

Developing sustainable VISTA projects is a long, complicated process. Funding, marketing and volunteer resources are important when developing a sustainable project, the trust and respect a community feels toward a VISTA and their host agency is the key to whether a program will succeed or not. Ultimately, sustainability for VISTA projects means stakeholders taking the long-range approach to community development and acknowledging the need for and working toward earning the trust and respect of the community they work in and those they serve.

A VISTA project should create an environment for local, regional and national stakeholders to become involved members of the project. This involvement yields critical benefits: civic engagement, a recognition that local efforts can affect national policy, a community forum to illustrate how volunteerism can elicit positive change, and it is an opportunity for a VISTA member to see how one person's efforts can organize and mobilize a community to address social justice issues.

Getting things done is the mantra of AmeriCorps; and sustaining this work is its legacy. A VISTA who understands the importance of creating a sustainable project and who has the tools to do so can create long-term change. This change is dual fold. A community that rallies to address a concern and helps craft a long-range vision for the issue is primed to take on other challenges and is confident in their ability to elicit change. For the member the change is lifelong, service becomes a way of life and mobilizing communities to take action becomes a passion.

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Appendix

Interview Guide For Host Sites

I. Background
- Please describe your community (population, location, community needs, community involvement in your cause, etc.)
- Could you tell me a little bit about your organization's history?
- When and why did you decide to apply for VISTAs? What years did the grant run for?
- What did your VISTA application focus on? How many VISTAs were in your grant (did that change over the grant period). If a recent grant did you involve other streams of service (Senior Corps, NCCC, AmeriCorps State and National)?
- What does the ____project look like now that there aren't VISTAs working there?
- How have VISTAs shaped your organization?
- How has your community changed?
- Any good VISTA service stories?

II. Sustainability Strategies
- How did you address sustainability in your VISTA project?
- Were community collaborators identified? If so, what role did they play in the project?
- How did you address the issue of sustainability with your VISTAs (training, discussions, community involvement).
- Did the issue of sustainability change during the project years for the VISTAs?
- What did you do to ensure sustainability during the last VISTA grant year?
- What are the key strategies that you would tell other project supervisors for creating a sustainable project?

III. Expectations
- How could VISTA programs better address sustainability? How might the role of the state/national office change?
- If you could design a sustainability training program, what would it look like?
- What would be useful to you research wise? Training and resource wise?
- Is there anything you'd like to add? Any questions?

Interview Guide for State Offices

I. Background and Strategies
- What impact have VISTAs had on your state?
- What does a project need to do to prepare itself for a VISTA grant?
- What do you consider a sustainable project?
- What has made these projects sustainable?
- What are some examples of projects/alumni that you feel have created a sustainable project?
- How have you addressed the issue of sustainability in your state? (training, workplans, selection)
- Have you used advisory boards? Why or why not? What have they/could they contribute?

II. Expectations
- How could VISTA programs better address sustainability? How might the role of each of the stakeholders change?
- If you could design a sustainability training program, what would it look like?
- What would be useful to you research wise? Training and resource wise?

III. VISTA Characteristics
- When placing VISTAs, what attention should be paid to what year the grant is in. Do different grant years call for different talents?
- Are there important balances to have in VISTA projects?
- VISTAabuse
- What are some typical VISTA pitfalls?
- Is there a difference between national and local recruits?
- How do you articulate/assess the direct vs. non-direct stipulation?
- Can you characterize the following types of VISTA needs supervisory need: motivation, communication, experiential?

IV. Pearls of Wisdom/Don't Reinvent the Wheel
- Exemplary workplans
- Templates that would be helpful to others (job descriptions, tracking systems, orientation/EST trainings, etc.) pearls of wisdom/don't reinvent the wheel)
- Communication Strategies
- VISTA alumni, staff, projects I should contact?
- Is there anything you'd like to add? Any questions?

Interview Guide For VISTA Alums

I. Background

- Could you tell me a little bit about why you decided to become a VISTA?
- How did your family members and friends react to your decision?
- How did you select the project you wanted to work on?
- Describe the community you served in.
- Describe your host organization. What was their mission?
- What projects did you work on as a VISTA?
- Did you serve with other VISTAs? What was your interaction with them?
- Do you know what's happened to your host organization as well as your project since you left?

II. Service Year(s)

- What are some of the memorable moments of your VISTA experience?
- What were some of the major obstacles you faced? How did you contend with them? What did you learn (frustration is the education)?
- What interaction did you have with the local community?
- How did you address sustainability in your project?

III. Impact of the Experience

- What kind of an impact do you feel you've had upon the community you served in?
- What kind of an impact has the VISTA experience had you personally? Professionally?
- Anything else you'd like to share

VISTA Sustainability Project
Fact Sheet

What are the goals of this research?
1. Assess how AmeriCorps*VISTA has addressed sustainability in trainings, project development, and resource dissemination and identify alumni who exemplify the commitment to life long service.
2. Create accessible, practical sustainability resource material for members, project directors and CNS staff.
3. Disseminate sustainability findings to the field and identify networks that can continue working on this issue in the future.

What role do the interviews play in the research?
The interviews will be used to identify successful strategies AmeriCorps members have employed to develop sustainable projects in their communities. Case studies will be developed from some of the interview material and used to profile how AmeriCorps projects established community collaborations and created a long-range vision for their project.

How will this research be used?
The research will be use to develop a **VISTA Sustainability Guide.** There is a possibility that the paper could be published and/or used by other training and technical assistance providers.

VISTA alumni material will be used for an on-line oral history project and may be included in material developed for the 35th Anniversary celebration for VISTA.

Who is supporting this research?
Funding for this research was made possible by the Corporation for National Service under the National Service Fellowship Program. For more information about National Service and the Fellowship Program, visit their website at <www.nationalservice.org>

Who is conducting the research?
Amy Bonn is conducting this research as a private government contractor and is solely responsible for the content of the paper and for following appropriate research protocol. Questions, suggestions or concerns about the research can be direct to her at: 606 N. Aurora Street, Ithaca, New York, by phone at 607.272.8821 or via e-mail at <aeb27@cornell.edu>

Consent Form for Participation in the VISTA Sustainability Project

This form is to document that the undersigned participant has had an opportunity read and discuss the research fact sheet with Amy Bonn, project coordinator. By signing this form, the participant acknowledges goals of the research as well as his/her role in the research and agrees to take part in the project. Furthermore, the participant understands that his/her participation in the project is voluntary and that he/she can terminated participation at any time. Participants in this project also have the opportunity to ask that their agency and or personal interview be given a pseudonym for the publication of this project. At the end of each interview, participants will be presented with this option.

Please note that these forms will be kept in a confidential research file and will **not** be included in any portion of the formal research.

I give my permission for the interview and photographic material to be used in the writing of **VISTA Sustainability Guide.**

_____   _____

Name of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Amy Bonn, Project Coordinator   Date

The Pebble in the Pond: Social Justice Action

The fundamental community development question that a VISTA grapples with is, "How can I mobilize people to take action on poverty issues?" Social justice issues are challenging, and when discussing poverty issues in particular people often react with feelings of guilt, become defensive or are at a loss as to how to respond or get involved. When interviewing alumni, supervisors and corporation staff, the common theme that emerged was not one of a VISTA finding funding or resources but rather of the VISTA who delved into a community's ecology [1] and used this as the basis for a successful project. Perhaps the best example of this is a story from a VISTA project in Ardmore, Oklahoma. Virginia Lang, the VISTA supervisor spoke about how their small town had very clear racial boundaries and that the African-American community wasn't really involved in the organization's activities. When the first set of VISTAs arrived in Ardmore she sent them out to meet with the local leaders in the community. Included in this list was the pastor of the Macedonia Baptist church. When Josh, a first- week VISTA, went to meet with the pastor he asked, "Is there anything we can do to help?" The pastor thought for a minute and said, "No, not unless you want to mow our lawn." With that, Josh, a Jewish kid from the East Coast, went out and mowed the church's lawn. He did that every other week the entire year he served. Virginia Lang says with that the doors were open then. It built harmony because the VISTAs are "that way." This story illustrates the need for VISTAs to spend time establishing trusting relationships in the community they serve. By mowing the lawn on a regular basis Josh showed the Baptist church that he was interested, invested and committed to their well being. These are simple gestures but they form the basis for a lasting relationship.

There is no general formula or training that can explain to a VISTA how to establish trust in their community. There are however some basic common questions and "barriers" to a trusting relationship between the VISTA, the individuals they are trying to mobilize, the community they are trying to help and the social justice they are trying to achieve. The following matrix illustrates the tension between an individual's rights and community needs by showing the connection between personal commitments and external commitments[2]. Additionally, the matrix outlines the obstacles faced when trying to advance a social justice agenda by presenting questions that hinder movement and looking at what fundamental elements can be applied to help overcome these obstacles. Finally, a continuum of social action is explored which outlines how individual action is the basis of social justice.

[1] Community ecology. Phrase from the Daniel Blumenthal VISTA alumni interview referring to the importance of a VISTA finding out about their host community's history and expectations for the project. This theme is also addressed in the "Wisdom from the Field" activity in the training module.
[2] External commitment-Responsibilities outside of ones' individual needs and family concerns.

Social Justice Action Matrix

Human Element	Question	Foundation	Action
Social Justice	What is a just society?	Love	Breathing
Community	How do we agree upon a common definition of what constitutes a "good community"?	Trust	Voicing
Neighbor	What if my rights, needs and thoughts conflict with my neighbors?	Obligation	Listening
VISTA	How will I benefit?	Meliorism	Reflecting

The VISTA

This process of reflection is the first action step in the matrix. Reflection connects an individual to the service experience and from this can be elicited a belief that humankind can have an impact on a social issue.

Reflection empowers an individual to overcome theses discomforts and empowers the individual to take a risk by aiding a neighbor in need. Meliorism is coming to an understanding that one individual can make a difference and that we need to start with our neighbors is meliorism.

The Neighbor

Breaking down the barriers between neighbors and listening to their challenges yields a willingness to step outside of one's yard to assist a neighbor in need. An obligation to one's neighbor is forged when this risk is taken and a neighbor begins to understand the challenges and feels obliged to take action.

The Community

Similar to the neighbor relationship, poverty stereotypes must be broken down and must come to terms with the fact that their community has social challenges.

The tension between individual needs and community concerns in a democratic society is strong. As Jean Bethke Elshtain states, "The great challenge was to create a political body that brought people together and created a we but still enabled individualities. That remains the great challenge for all modern democrates."(Elshtain, page 259). Trust is paramount in creating a we. To overcome the fear that personal expenditures (financial, time, or belief) are not going to negatively affect the individual but rather enrich their community is difficult to achieve. Individuals who make up a community must learn to trust one another and find solutions that make neighbors understand that by reaching out we are improving not only our own life but that of our neighbors and the community as a whole.

Civil Society

As a society we have to ask ourselves if these social challenges are just? Is it immoral for us to stand by while neighbors struggle? If we choose not to take action, how does this affect our society? If we agree that there are basic human rights: food, shelter, clothing, health care, and education and if all of citizens do not have access to these basic human rights then we become a less dignified society with every citizen we choose to ignore. From this it can then be said that apathy to human need makes a society weak.

Individuals have to be willing to contribute to the "greater good" to look beyond their own personal needs and see how by improving conditions for their neighbors they are improving life for everyone. In his speech to the 1984 Democratic convention, Mario Cuomo addresses this "surrender."

> To succeed we will have to surrender small parts of our individual interests, to build a platform we can all stand on, at once, comfortably, proudly singing out the truth for the nation to hear in a chorus, its logic so clear and commanding that no slick commercial, no amount of geniality, no martial music will be able to muffle it...We believe in a single, fundamental idea that describes better than most textbooks and any speech what a proper government should be. The idea of family. Mutuality. The sharing of benefits and burdens for the good of all. ..We believe we must be a family of America, recognizing that at the heart of the matter we are bound one to another. (Cuomo, pages 414-419)

It is up to the general public, policymakers and advocates to build trust and to give these conditions visibility and to develop programs that accurately meets their needs of their community. An example of a call to action is Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." In which he discusses Cuomo's "family" as a network.

> I am cognizant of the inter-relatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds. (King, page 79)

If our destinies are truly tied then it is imperative that we reach out to those in need. If we let a portion of our society become invisible we lose a piece of our collective soul.

> What we would like to do is change the world—make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. And to a certain extent, by fighting for the rights of the workers, of the poor, of the destitute—the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, in other words—we can to a certain extent change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever-widening circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing that we can do but love. (Ellsberg, page 343).

Poverty is not an issue that can be rationalized; addressing it is a matter of love. It's a matter of human dignity and personal honor to care for those in need, realizing that our own worth and dignity are reflected in our daily actions and by how seriously we take our responsibility to our fellow man. Taking a risk to understand the life that we may some day lead or by the grace of luck or a higher power don't and recognizing that it is our time and our responsibility to take action is an act of love.

Ultimately, service to others is an act of love based upon trust, obligation and the belief that we can make a difference. This love is generated by answering difficult questions as an individual, neighbor, resident of a community and member of a

civil society. When we take action upon needs outside of our own, we become more human because we learn that humanity cannot move forward unless propelled by such actions. By reaching outside of ourselves we unearth the best parts of ourselves and our community.

As a society we should aim for the day when social justice actions no longer have to be classified as "service," a day when such actions become as subconscious as breathing. Love, in its truest form, becomes something we do without thought. Daily we love our family and our friends without making a conscious decision to do so. If we are to become a truly civil society we must stretch ourselves and apply this same love those most in need. On such a day, social justice becomes an act of love and this love blends into the fiber of our soul.

Stone Soup Training Module

Stone Soup Training Module: Sustaining the AmeriCorps*VISTA Experience

Facilitator's Guide

What's for Dinner: Introduction to the Stone Soup Sustainability Workshop

Welcome to the Stone Soup Training Program! The Facilitator's Guide will help you train people in the AmeriCorps*VISTA (VISTA) service community on the issue of sustainability. The guide provides you with a listing of key sustainability themes, sustainability skill-building activities and resources for developing sustainable VISTA programs. There are eleven training activities in the module that can adapted to meet the needs and programming concerns of the host site and VISTAs. The training is most useful if conducted during the first two months of service. The second half of the training module is a sample participant's guide. You are encouragee to cut, paste and add material to the participant guide so that it reflects the sustainability training you are running.

The Stone Soup Training Module was developed from a series of interviews and trainings with VISTAs, VISTA Leaders, VISTA alumni, VISTA supervisors and Corporation for National Service staff. The themes presented in the training represent thirty-five years of community development wisdom from the work VISTA has accomplished in communities across the United States.

The Stone Soup Philosophy on Sustainability: It's important to point out two philosophies that the Stone Soup trainings support. First this training looks at sustainability in terms of how to build a sustainable VISTA project (projects that last long after the VISTA grant is completed) as well as how to develop sustainable VISTA members (people who have made a commitment to life-long service).

The second philosophy Stone Soup supports is that sustainability for a VISTA project is best defined by its host community. The Stone Soup training outlines questions to ask, illustrates how sustainability has been built in other projects and builds skills for VISTAs to integrate sustainability into their workplans. However, the discussion of sustainability needs to occur on the local level, with host site staff and board members, community members, clients and VISTAs so that the definition

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reflects the community served. Ultimately, what a sustainable project looks like is based upon the host community's needs and desires.

The Faciliator's Guide is part of a sustainability series developed for the AmeriCorps*VISTA community. There are two other resource pieces in the series: **Stone Soup Sustainability: A Supervisor's Guide to Developing AmeriCorps*VISTA Workplans** and **Making Soup from a Stone: A Sustainability Workbook for AmeriCorps*VISTA Members**. The Guidebook was designed to follow an AmeriCorps*VISTA project from its beginning stages all the way through its final grant year and provides supervisors with the checklists, timelines and sample project material to help create, implement and sustain a VISTA project. The Guide can be found at <www.nationalservice.org/jobs/fellowships/1999-00.html>. The Workbook helps VISTAs collect and organize important project information so that it can be passed on to their successor. The Workbook can also be found at <www.nationalservice.org/jobs/fellowships/1999-00.html>.

I hope you enjoy the Stone Soup Training and that it helps you build sustainable projects and VISTAs.

~Amy Bonn, National Service Fellow, VISTA Alum.

The Shopping List:
Sustainability Activities to Choose From

Name of Activity	Time	Objectives
What's for Dinner: Introduction to the Workshop	15 min.	Overview of training and set expectations of training.
Icebreaker: Weaving a Web	20 min.	Learn how to build a sustainable network.
Icebreaker: Which Fork Do I Use? Two Sides of Sustainability	15 min.	Gain an appreciation of the impact sustainability has upon their host community.
Getting into the Mix: Defining Sustainability	30 min.	Develop a definition of sustainability for their project and their service year.
Making Out the Menu: Two Tales of Sustainability	45 min.	Learn role each stakeholde has in creating a sustainable project.
The Right Ingredients: Wisdom from the Field	50 min.	Discuss the connection between the host site, workplan and VISTA through lessons from VISTA alumni.
Finding a Kettle That Works for You: Paradigms and Your Community Development Outlook	20 min.	Identify creative solutions to community challenges.
Setting the Table: Sustainability Workplan Exercise	80 min.	Develop a sustainability plan for VISTA project.
Soup for the Soul: VISTA Vision	35 min.	Write a personal mission statement for their service experience.
Washing the Dishes: Wrap Up and Evaluation	10 min.	Provide feedback on the training.

Preworkshop Preparation

A couple of suggestions for setting up your workshop:

1. Make copies of participant guide. A template for the participant guide is located in the back of your facilitator's guide. Pick and choose what activities you are going to cover and include these sheets in your participant guide.

2. Put the chairs/desk in a circle. Flipchart posters you might want to post up around the room:

   a. Workshop agenda

   b. Sample vision statements (page 48-50)

   c. Sustainability matrix (page 15)

   d. Definition of vista and sustainability (page 15)

   e. List the key points from "Wisdom from the Field"(pages 29-36) on a flipchart.

   f. Sample workplan timeline (page 43). You may want to use this sample or develop one of your own to illustrate how the sustainability activity works.

   g. A poster with "Be Clear, Concise and Committed" with the important points (1. your sustainability statement; 2. who your stakeholders are; 3. what your big idea is; and 4. what the project will look like after you are gone) to cover during the report-back portion of the sustainability workplan activity.

3. Modify the sample workshop evaluation page xx so that it reflects the training and evaluation information you are trying to capture.

4. If you are doing the "Weaving the Web" icebreaker, you'll want to hang or tack up rope so that participants can hang their index cards from it.

5. If you are doing the "Finding a Kettle that Works for You" exercise, you'll want to make a flipchart with the answer on it (page 38)

Good Luck!

What's for Dinner: Introduction to the Workshop

A couple of suggestions as you begin a sustainability workshop.

1. Introduce yourself and let participants know a little bit about your experience with VISTA.

2. Have participants introduce themselves and say what project they are from.

3. Review the agenda with participants and let participants know the goals of the workshop and what skills they will have once they've completed the workshop. Depending upon what activities you choose for your agenda will determine what these are but an example would be: "The goal of this workshop is to give you clear idea of how your project can be sustained after your service year is over. By the end of the session you'll have a draft of a sustainability workplan for your project."

4. Ask the group what their expectations are for the workshop. Make a list of these on a flipchart and post this on the wall when the list is completed.

5. Encourage participants to share their talents and resources with the group, one of the great benefits of VISTA trainings is the networking that occurs. Oftentimes in sustainability trainings a participant will say "It would really help my project if we had…." And another participant will chime in and say, "Our agency has done that, I can share that with you." Share resources and talents in the room. VISTAs are oftentimes their own best resources for one another.

6. Some of the material covered in the sessions may be personal or what they consider "a work in progress" and might not feel comfortable sharing with the group remind participants that it's always okay to pass, that they don't have to share everything they work on during the training.

7. If you decided to do "VISTA Vision" it's helpful to bring this idea up early in the training so that VISTAs can start thinking about what their vision statement might say. In your introduction to the training, mention that this is one of the projects the VISTAs will be working on and encourage them to think about what they might write. Point out some of the mission statements famous people and other VISTAs have written (pageXX).

8. See if anyone has any questions about the training. Start in on the training.

Have fun!

Icebreaker: Weaving a Web

Purpose:

This icebreaker is a good opportunity for participants to get to know one another's talents, projects, service concerns and desires.

Major Themes:

❖ Sustainability means building a network of resources.

❖ Bartering can be an important tool for bringing together resources you need for your project.

❖ Fellow VISTA projects/staff are excellent resources of information and materials. You aren't alone in your VISTA experience; there are lots of people and resources out there to assist you.

Time: 20 minutes	
Activity	**Time**
Read questions to the group	2 min.
Participants complete cards	5 min.
Participants read cards	5 min.
Participants find similarities	5 min.
Review web and wrap up	3 min.

Materials Needed:
> One long piece of rope
> String
> Three index cards per participant
> Scissors
> A pen or pencil per participant
> Flipchart and markers

Participants' Instructions

❖ On the first index card, please write three talents or resources that you and/or your organization/host community have. Think about talents or resources that you have that you can barter with other community organizations or individuals. Some examples are: you are a great grant writer, you can juggle, your nonprofit has a lending library with 1,000 books in it, etc.

❖ On the second card please write one challenge you face this year with your project and name at least two resources that would help you overcome this challenge.

❖ On the third card please complete the following sentence, "The footprint I want to leave in my community is..."

Suggested Process

1. Hand out the 3 index cards per participant

2. Ask each participant to complete the statements to the right on their index cards.

3. Once the participants have completed all three cards, have them tape a piece of string to the back of their cards connecting them together and then attach the cards to the rope.

4. When all of the participants have attached their cards to their piece of rope have them introduce themselves by reading each of their cards. Remind participants that it's always okay for them to pass if they'd rather not share all or part of what they've written.

5. Once all of the cards have been read, ask participants to tieor tape pieces of string to those cards that they identify with. For example, they might need a talent that one of the other participants has listed, they might empathize with a challenge another participant is facing, they might support the footprint that a participant wants to leave in their community.

6. Review and Wrap-Up: Ask participants, "What do you see?" and write the responses down on a flipchart. As you wrap-up this activity a couple of things you want to point out to participants:

❖ **There are a lot of great resources in this room; make sure you tap into them during your year.**

❖ **Much like the web you've created, it takes a lot of people to accomplish a task. It may look messy but in the end it's a strong network that will support and sustain your work.**

Icebreaker: Which Fork Do I Use? Two Sides of Sustainability

Purpose: This activity illustrates what happens in communities when sustainability happens and what occurs if sustainability is not achieved.

Major Themes:

❖ Importance of building and sustaining community trust

❖ The positive long-term impact of a sustained project can have upon a community

Time: 15 minutes	
Activity	**Time**
Warm Up	5 min.
Brainstorm what a sustainable project looks like	3 min.
Brainstorm what happens when a project isn't sustained	3 min.
Review flipcharts	4 min.

Materials Needed:
    Flipchart and markers

Suggested Process

1. Warm the group up by asking "Name some things that illustrate sustainability." Here are a couple of examples:

   - The Great Wall of China
   - the hoola hoop
   - long-term committed relationships
   - Shakespeare's plays

   Then have the group name some things that have not lasted, such as

   - Donald Trump running for President
   - Peace Accords in Ireland
   - Pepsi Free
   - Musical one hit wonders

Sample of How Two Sides Icebreaker might look

Community with Sustainable VISTA Projects	Community with VISTA Projects that Weren't Sustained
• safe Communities • funding support for non-profits • ability to try new things • respect • community involvement	• non-profits protecting their "turf" • difficult to recruit volunteers • closed doors • community wary of gov't funded community programs

2. Ask participants brainstorm about what a community looks like when it has sustainable projects. Write participant responses on the flipchart (see above).

3. Ask participants to brainstorm about what a community looks like when projects aren't sustained. Write responses on the flipchart (see above).

4. Review the differences between the responses. Ask participants some open-ended questions such as, "What happens in a community that doesn't have sustainable project? What happens to the community's level of trust? What happens when a project is sustained; how does this empower a community?"

Getting into the Mix

Purpose: This session illustrates sustainability and how it relates to the VISTA experience.

Major Themes:

❖Duality of sustainability (both for projects and VISTAs)

❖Illustration of how the VISTA, the project workplan and the host site must all work together to achieve sustainability.

❖VISTAs as catalysts for social change.

Time: 30 *minutes*	
Activity	**Time**
Read <u>Stone Soup</u>	5 min.
Open-ended questions	5 min.
Definition of VISTA and sustainability	10 min.
Review sustainability model	10 min.

Materials Needed:

    Flipchart and markers
    Copy of Stone Soup story per participant
    Flipchart sheet with definition of vista and sustainability
    Flipchart sheet with sustainability model

The Story of Stone Soup

A hungry peddler comes upon a town in famine. While looking for a place to have dinner the peddler meets up with the town blacksmith. When the peddler asks where he might partake in a meal, the blacksmith said "You'll find no food here, all the townspeople have hoarded their food and will not share with one another, especially not a stranger." To this the peddler declared that he had all the ingredients for a wonderful meal and that he would cook for the famine-ridden town. The peddler asked if he could borrow a kettle from the blacksmith and began to build a fire. When the blacksmith returned with the kettle they filled it with water and waited for it to boil. When the water began to boil the peddler reached deep into his coat pocket and pulled out a simple stone. He dropped the stone into the kettle of boiling water and leaned over the kettle and sniffed the air, licked his lips and declared that this was to be one of the best batches of stone soup he ever made. The townspeople began to gather around the kettle to see what this peddler was cooking up. Curiosity and hunger broke the silence of one townsman who said, "Stone soup is good, but it's even better with potatoes." Another villager shouted out, "What you really needed are quality carrots." And with that the villagers went to their respective homes, brought out the best food in their cabinets and dropped it in the pot. After all of the villagers had eaten the marvelous stone soup, they offered to purchase the stone. The peddler replied that he couldn't take money for the stone and left it for the townspeople. Years after the famine had passed, villagers could still be heard bragging about how wonderful their community's stone soup was.

~Old Russian Folk Tale

Suggested Process

1. Read <u>Stone Soup.</u> The Facilitator can read it to the group out loud, the group can take turns reading the story or you can have participants read to themselves.

2. Ask a few open-ended questions about the story: "What does the peddler do to build sustainability?" "How is a VISTA's role similar to the peddler's?" "What kinds of 'stones' can VISTAs leave in their communities?"

Important points to pull out of the story:

❖ The peddler takes on a new role in the community.
❖ The peddler is able to mobilize resources.
❖ The peddler convinces the community to bring the best they have to the kettle.
❖ The community creates a wonderful meal that all can enjoy.
❖ The peddler/VISTA leaves the recipe and the soup continues to be made after the Peddler is gone.

American Heritage Dictionary *definition of sustainability:* 1. To keep in existence; maintain. 2. To supply with necessities or nourishment; provide for. 3. To support from below; prop. 4. To support the spirits, vitality, or resolution of; encourage. 5. To affirm the validity or justice of. 6. To prove or corroborate; confirm.

American Heritage Dictionary *definition of vista:* 1. A distant view seen through an opening. A comprehensive awareness of a series of remembered, present or anticipated events.

VISTA Sustainability Model

SUSTAINABILITY

Long-Range Vision for Adressing Issue	⟷	Community Involvement and Empowerment	⟷	Life-Long Commitment to Service

Community Needs and Assets	⟷	Workplan that Reflects Community Desires	⟷	VISTA Takes Action on Community Issue(s)

Host Organization	⟷	Workplan	⟷	VISTA

3. Read the definitions for vista and sustainability and discuss how sustainability might be defined in the VISTA host community and specifically for their project. What kinds of "stones" are needed for the project to become sustainable? What expectations do VISTAs have about how their service experience might affect decisions they will make about their futures?
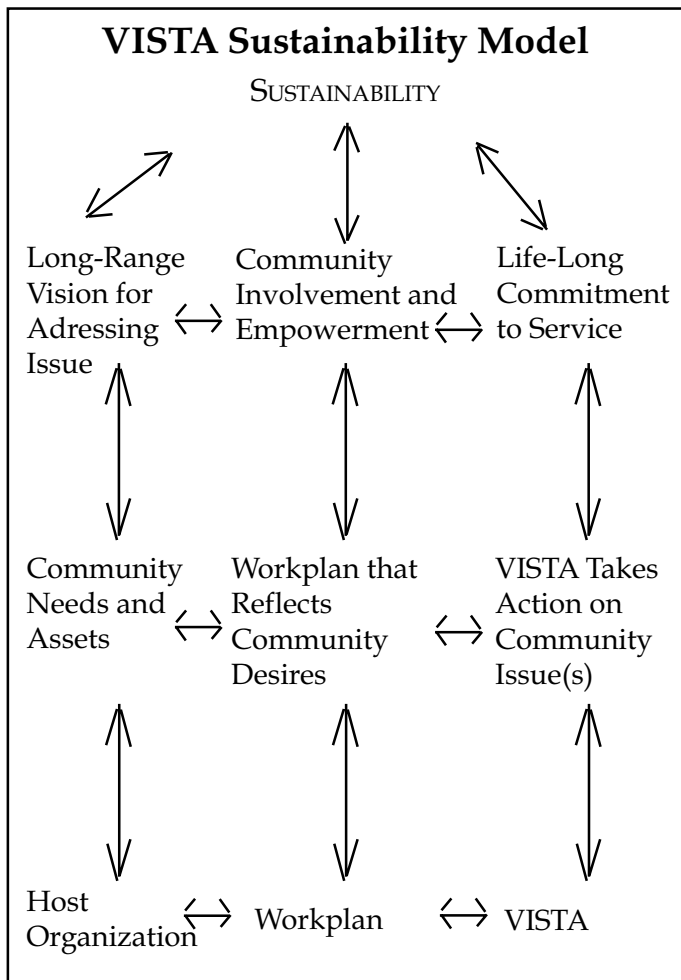
4. Review sustainability model
❖ Follow each of the three foundations (VISTA, workplan and host site) through the model and ask why each of these steps are important.)
❖ Follow each of the connections between the three foundations and talk about why it's important for these three to be tied together and how this might be done in their project.
❖ If you did the "Weaving the Web" icebreaker, ask the participants to think about how their footprint can fit into this model. What do they have to do to make sure their project is sustained (do they have community buy-in, has a community assessment been done, etc.)?

Making Out the Menu: Two Tales of Sustainability

Purpose:

This session illustrates how sustainability was addressed in two VISTA projects, one where sustainability occurred and one where it did not. Both stories are based on strategies used by former VISTAs projects.

Major Themes:

❖The importance of the workplan

❖ Communication between VISTAs, site supervisor and state office staff.

❖ The impact of achieving or not achieving sustainability can have upon a community.

Time: 45 minutes	
Activity	**Time**
Groups read and discuss Sandy Beach Corporation story	10 min.
Groups read and discuss Yates Literacy Council story	10 min.
Large group discussion	15 min.
Participants write up three sustainability strategies	5 min.
Wrap-up	5 min.

Materials Needed:

    Flipchart and markers

    Index cards

    Copy of Sandy Beach Housing Corporation story per four participants

    Copy of Yates Literacy Council story per four participants

Sandy Beach Housing Corporation

Cast of Characters:

Gwen: Acting Director of Sandy Beach Housing Corporation

John: Locally Recruited VISTA

Penny: Nationally Recruited VISTA

Phyllis: Sandy Beach Housing Corporation Secretary

Located in a small town in the rural Northeast, Sandy Beach Housing Corporation's (SBC) mission is to provide quality housing opportunities to the low-income residents of a three-county area. Recently, SBC has gone through some administrative changes. The executive director of twenty years retired, the office manager took a job with a local bank and the board chair stepped down because the time commitment was becoming too much of a strain on him. With several large housing grants pending and the construction of ten new housing units, SBC faced lots of interesting work.

When the acting director, Gwen, took over, she had several new projects that she wanted SBC to take on. One of the first applications Gwen submitted was to AmeriCorps*VISTA. SBC applied for three VISTAs: one economic development coordinator, one community outreach coordinator and one volunteer coordinator. The goal of the VISTA grant was develop an economic development program for SBC's clients. SBC was new to small-business ventures but Gwen felt it was important for SBC to diversify its activities.

Suggested Process

1. Ask participants to break up in to groups of four. Have each group read the Sandy Beach Housing Corporation story. Below are some questions that might help guide the discussion:

❖ How did this story make you feel? or How do you think the VISTAs felt in this situation?

❖ What impact does a project that isn't sustained have upon a community, a host organization and the VISTAs?

❖ How might the situation have been changed? What could the supervisor or the VISTAs done to have improved the situation?

SBC recruited two VISTAs, one national and one local to fill two of the slots; the third slot remained unfilled. When the VISTAs, John and Penny, started Gwen was away at a housing training and so the SBC secretary, Phyllis, told the VISTAs to take the first week they were in town to "settle in."

When Gwen returned, she met with the VISTAs and reviewed some of the upcoming SBC projects. There were a couple of grants due, SBC's annual fundraiser to organize and an annual report to write, publish and distribute. Gwen told the VISTAs that because SBC was low on staff right now that she'd really appreciate it if they could pitch in and help out until they were able to increase staff. John and Penny agreed and split the project work for the annual report, the logistics for the fundraiser and drafting two of the grants.

When John and Penny asked Gwen when they might have access to a computer and phone, they were told to share with the Phyllis and, "If you do well with that application to the Lagios Foundation, we'll be able to purchase a new computer and put in another phone line!"

That afternoon Penny and John sat down to try and organize their work. Penny would draft the grants and find entertainment for the fundraiser. John said he would take on the fundraiser raffle, draft and find a printer for the annual report.

John and Penny asked Phyllis where they could find past annual reports and grants so that they could get a sense of what SBC had done before. Phyllis found a few grant applications for housing projects (the two grants Penny was working on were for small business) and an annual report from 1996. Working with what she had Penny drafted two grant proposals, John edited them and then they submitted them to Gwen. When Gwen had a chance to review the grants she said "Nice first draft, but I don't think the grants capture what we are trying to accomplish with our micro-enterprise program." When Penny asked for some suggestions and direction about how she could revise the grants, Gwen told her that she didn't have time to go over it with her this week and that she should be focusing her efforts on the SBC fundraiser. Penny put the grants aside and went in search of band for the fundraiser.

John had a similar experience when he met with Gwen to talk about the fundraiser and the annual report. He told Gwen he was finding it difficult to elicit donations for the fundraiser raffle because he often didn't have access to a phone. He said his big accomplishment was getting a local restaurant to donate a gourmet meal for four. Gwen was annoyed that John had gone to the restaurant owners because they were large donors to SBC and said it wasn't appropriate to ask them to donate additional goods. Gwen picked up the phone, called the restaurant owners and apologized for the request, citing that, "John is a new volunteer and doesn't know better."

Disappointed but not deterred, the VISTAs continued to work on their projects. Penny found a local band to play at the fundraiser and John finished a draft of the annual report and had twenty items donated for the raffle. Both John and Gwen attended the fundraiser and had a chance to meet community members who were involved in SBC activities. The typical questions from the evening were "What's a VISTA?" or "Are you taking over the office manager's position?" At the end of the night, SBC had raised $5,000 from raffle and dinner ticket sales. John and Penny were thrilled that their hard work had helped SBC.

Over the weekend, one of SBC's housing units had major water damage and five families were without homes. Gwen called John and Penny and asked them to help with clean up and to try and find temporary housing for the families. John and Penny spent the next week tracking down housing options for the families, getting food and clothing to them, helping with insurance claims, and finding furniture for the families. At the end of the week all of the families were situated in temporary housing and had their basic needs met. The following Monday, Penny realized that one of the grants was due by the end of the week. She spent two days trying to get an appointment with Gwen and when they did meet Gwen said she would review the drafts and get back to her. On Friday morning Gwen rushed into the office and told John, Phyllis and Penny to drop everything. "We need to re-do the grant and get it to the post office by five o'clock and if we run later, someone can drive to Federal Express in the city and we'll have until ten o'clock." Gwen said as she rushed to find the latest draft of Penny's grant on her desk. For the next eleven hours everyone in the office ran around copying material, tracking down board members for signatures, calling local agencies for letters of support and

revising the program goals for the micro-enterprise program. Penny took the grant to Federal Express, paid the mailing charges with her own money and headed home.

The next month was challenging for the VISTAs. When a crisis arose they had lots of work to do but when there wasn't a crisis they didn't have any specific projects to work on. They tried meeting with Gwen who was very busy with a capital campaign and didn't have a lot of time to give to give them When she did meet with them she told them, "Hang in there, when we get those grants, we'll have lots of work to do!"

When it came time to write the first quarterly report, Gwen asked the VISTAs to draft it. As they reviewed the AmeriCorps grant material they realized that the report was based on a workplan for their project which they had never seen. Both John and Penny were unhappy with their placement and decided that they would meet with Gwen to discuss their concerns. Gwen canceled the meeting twice because of other obligations, and when she was able to meet with the VISTAs they were fired up. "Why has it taken two and a half months to see this workplan?" John asked. "This workplan doesn't even mention grant writing!" said Penny. Gwen was surprised by the VISTAs' reaction and said that she would take some time to review the workplan and come up with projects for them to work on.

The following week Gwen gave the VISTAs a list of projects for the economic development program. The two projects Gwen wanted the VISTAs to work on were to run an interest session to find out how many local residents might be interested in participating in the program and to find local business people who would be willing to serve as mentors for the project. John and Penny went to work organizing advertising an information session and began contacting local business people to find out if they would participate. Fifteen residents showed up for the meeting and were very interested in the potential of the program. Some residents began asking if SBC could help them get computers or if they could help with small loans and others, current business owners, wanted to know if this kind of work was going was going to affect their business. John and Penny took notes and asked if residents would be willing to attend a follow-up meeting to discuss their concerns and questions and update them on the progress of the economic development program. After the meeting Gwen said that John and Penny should

hold off on the next meeting until they found out whether or not they had won the economic development grant funds.

For the next month, the VISTAs continued to do crisis work here and there and Gwen continued to rush around trying to manage all of the SBC projects. Just before Thanksgiving SBC received word that they had not been awarded either economic development grant. At this point, John and Penny decided to call the state office and resign. The state program officer, Ken, was surprised by their decision because this was the first he had heard of their concerns. Ken offered to do a site visit and meet with Gwen, but both of the VISTAs felt that they were too disenchanted with SBC to stay.

Penny decided to take another VISTA position at a literacy project in California; John stayed in town and was accepted at the local college for a degree in business.

Gwen was named permanent executive director of the Sandy Beach Corporation and is thinking of applying for RSVP volunteers to help out with office work. The economic development program was never pursued further.

Yates Literacy Council

Cast Of Characters:

Stephen: Yates Literacy council's Executive
        Director
Carlos: Locally recruited VISTA
Susan: Locally Recruited VISTA
Ed: Nationally Recruited VISTA
Penny: Nationally Recruited VISTA
Jenn: Stephen's Replacement
Carla: Ed's Mentor

Yates Literacy Council (YLC) is located in Morrison, a suburb of San Francisco. Established fifty years ago to help immigrants increase their language skills, YLC has expanded its efforts to include tutoring programs for children, citizenship classes and job readiness programs. YLC's director of the past five years, Stephen, applied for a VISTA grant to expand YLC's tutoring program so that each of the five local schools in the district would have their own site-based program. Stephen applied for four VISTAs: two program coordinators, one grant writer and one volunteer coordinator to help implement these "satellite sites." Two local people, Carlos and Susan, were recruited as VISTAs and two national recruits Ed and Penny, who had transferred there from Sandy Beach.

When the VISTAs arrived, Stephen ran a week-long orientation program for them. The orientation included an overview of YLC's history, programs and administrative policies, a tour of Morrison, an interagency nonprofit meeting, an intercorps council meeting with other local AmeriCorps members, a client panel where

Suggested Process CONTINUED

2. Ask the groups to read Yates Literacy Council story and use the following questions as a guide for the small group discussion:

❖ How is this story different from Sandy Beach?

❖ What role does a community play in ensuring sustainability?

❖ What are some of the reasons the Yates program was successful?

participants discussed their experience with YLC, a meeting with school administrators and reading teachers and a day when VISTAs reviewed the goals and objectives of their workplans and discussed expectations, roles and responsibilities. The week ended with a dinner with board members and YLC volunteers. At the dinner, VISTA was assigned to a mentor whose role was to introduce the VISTA to the community and help the VISTAs with their project.

Penny and Ed, the nationally recruited VISTAs who had relocated to serve, spent some time with their mentors finding affordable apartments, learning where to shop and bank and generally getting the lay of the land. Over the next month all of the VISTAs were encouraged to attend a series of community events from the Morrison Elk's Club Chili Cook-off to the local peewee soccer tournament. At these events, VISTAs met community leaders and learned a great deal about how the town felt about YLC and its programs.

During weekly VISTA staff meetings Stephen reviewed the progress of the VISTAs on their individual projects and assessed what resources they needed and wanted. In the second VISTA meeting Stephen addressed the issue of sustainability by talking with the VISTAs about what they want their projects to look like in a year. "Who is going to participate? Who is going to run it? How is it going to be ? These are questions you should be asking yourself daily," said Stephen. "The goal is to work yourself out of a job. I know that might sound odd, but you need to make sure there are resources and networks in place before you go so that all of you work doesn't end when you leave. The other thing you need to think about is what you need to be effective this year. It's important that you let me know what resources you need to so that you can complete your workplan." Over the next week each of the VISTAs thought about what type of training and resources they thought would be helpful to them. Carlos wanted to attend a grant-writing seminar, Penny found a nonprofit program development workshop offered by a national technical assistance provider, Ed wanted to attend a literacy conference in San Francisco and Susan decided to take Spanish lessons at the Morrison Community College. Stephen worked with each VISTA to make it possible to participate in these events.

YLC's office manager became rather ill and had to take a medical leave from work. In his absence, each of the YLC staff members was asked to take a shift covering the phones and helping with clerical duties. In the staff meeting Stephen asked if each

VISTAs would be willing to cover a slot, noting that he was covering the Wednesday 1-2:30 p.m. slot and Friday 9-10 a.m.. Penny was hesitant at first to do this when she worked at Sandy Beach she often had to do clerical work and it often wound up taking up all of her time. Penny was really excited about the satellite program the VISTAs were developing and didn't want her year to be detoured by office coverage. After the meeting she voiced her concers to Stephen, "You know I'm feeling like this year is going by really quickly and I'm concerned that I have enough time to do the work laid out in my workplan. Is office coverage necessary for the VISTAs?" Stephen thought for a moment and replied, "I appreciate your concern and commitment. A year is a short time to take on such a project. Office coverage isn't mandatory but it would help out. If you feel you have the time to cover a slot that would be great. If you don't have the time I'll respect your decision." Penny took one slot on Thursdays for the month duration of the office manager's leave and wound up getting to know several staff members better and learning the office filing, phone and computer system. She thought this wasn't the preferred way of doing things but she was glad she could help out and that it didn't last long.

Setting up the school-based satellite programs was going really well. Carlos, the fundraiser, had met with a local foundation that had donated $1,000 to get the programs started. A large bookstore chain offered ten boxes of remaindered books that the VISTAs thought might be useful to their project and his mentor, the head of the local Kiwanis Club offered the proceeds of their Christmas tree sales to the project. Susan, the volunteer coordinator, was organizing a volunteer fair and was in the process of designing a volunteer program that would suit YLC's needs. Penny and Ed were working together to find space in each of the five schools and to develop a program schedule for the schools. They had bimonthly meetings with the high school principals and reading teachers to update them on the progress of the program.

As the weeks progressed the VISTAs really got to know one another's talents and strengths. When Ed commented that one of the school satellite rooms was really dull and depressing Susan chimed in "Well, I used to paint murals. What do you think about me painting something in the room?" In a staff meeting Carlos said he was feeling as if he was always begging for money and that he was afraid that any time a community member saw him they thought that he would ask them for a donation and run the other way. Penny said that she'd like to try a little fundraising

and put some of the skills she learned in the community development workshop into practice. Carlos, an avid rollerblader, befriended a group of teen skaters and convinced them that they should sign up as YLC volunteers. He made it "cool" to volunteer and increased Susan's volunteer base by fifteen members.

Stephen set up a mid-year evaluation meeting with each of the VISTAs to find out where the VISTAs were with their projects, what resources they needed, review and re-evaluate the goals and objectives in the workplan and to find out what each of the VISTAs planned on doing after their service year. The first question Stephen asked was, "What are you doing as far as sustaining your project?" Carlos had found three funders to make five-year commitment to the satellite program. Susan said she had drafted a training manual and developed a volunteer database so that YLC staff members or a lead volunteer could run the program if need be. Ed and Penny said that they were working with each of the schools to formalize the partnerships to develop a long-range vision for the program—one that did not include VISTAs. The other question Stephen asked was "What are you thinking about doing after your service year is over?" None of the VISTAs had a clear idea of what they wanted to do so Stephen suggested that they tap into a partnership he had set up with the career services office at the local college. One of the career counselors offered to meet with each of the VISTAs to set up a post-service plan of action. The career center was willing to let the VISTAs use their library, let them attend career fairs and followed up with calls and meetings as needed.

In a staff meeting two months before the grand opening of the satellite schools, Stephen told the VISTAs that he had been offered a job at a local foundation. "It's a great opportunity, I can really help the nonprofit community in this position—I just can't turn it down," he said. Stephen told the VISTAs that YLC's assistant director, Jenn, would be taking over supervision of the VISTA program. Stephen said that he would give her an orientation to the VISTA projects and would appreciate the VISTAs input and participation in the process. While the VISTAs were disappointed by Stephen's departure, they understood his decision and immediately started thinking of a proposal that they could submit to the foundation as soon as he started.

The week before Stephen left, Ed received a call from his father saying that his mother was very ill and he was needed at home. Ed's family owned a small

hardware store in Florida. With his mother ill they really needed Ed to come back and help out. Stephen and Jenn worked with the state office to arrange for Ed's trip home and to close out his service. At Ed's going away party, Ed's mentor Carla, said, "In a short time you've done so much for us. I hope that you'll always consider Morrison a second home. Thank you for your service." The other VISTAs presented Ed with a box of macaroni and cheese and a can of beans so he wouldn't forget the staple VISTA diet.

Jenn's first week as the VISTA supervisor was a challenging one. The satellite school sites were a month away from opening and there was a lot of work to do. The VISTAs' morale was low because of Ed and Stephen leaving. Jenn decided to have a staff retreat and closed the office for a day and took everyone to a conference facility owned by the college. The staff spent the morning doing team-building activities and in the afternoon they developed a team strategy for the next six months of projects. In her journal that night, Penny wrote, "I learned a lot about leadership skills today. The ropes course was really challenging but by the end of it my trust and respect for the staff grew so much. The whole experience taught me a lot about program management and the importance of overcoming my fears and finding constructive solutions to challenging situations. I miss Stephen and Ed, but I know the program will go on without them. It's a good reminder to know what a gap not having them here makes in the program. In four months I won't be here any more and I want to make sure the satellite programs are up and running and that they won't rely on me in to continue. All in all a good day—free pizza, feeling a part of a team and knowing what the difference our program is going to make in Morrison. It doesn't get much better than this."

The satellite programs opened with great fanfare. At the open house to kick off the beginning of the programs one of the school principals said, "This is our community at its best. We appreciate the work of the VISTAs and of the marvelous partnerships they've created to make the literacy satellite programs a reality."

For the next four months the VISTAs were busy running tutor training programs, tracking down donations, working with the media and running the satellite programs. At the end of the year, Carlos was hired by YLC, Susan went back to school and Penny decided to do another year of service as an AmeriCorps Leader. In her final report to YLC she wrote "Serving as an AmeriCorps*VISTA member

has given me a confidence in my abilities to coordinate community-based projects. It's given me the practical, hands-on experience that I would not have gained at an entry-level position directly out of college. I've been able to take charge of my own projects and to put the skills and knowledge I gained in school to use; I've proven to myself that I can transfer my knowledge into action."

The Morrison satellite program has been running now for seven years. The first three years the VISTAs served as program developer, during which time money was raised to hire a full-time staff member to administer the program and a part-time volunteer coordinator. The program has now served more than 2,000 students in the town of Morrison.

Suggested Process CONTINUED

3. Ask each of the participants to identify three sustainability strategies that they could use in their project (it could be for their members, their project or a combination of the two). Have participants write these strategies on an index card.

4. Have participants share their strategies (if they are willing) and make a master list of these on a flipchart.

5. Wrap up activity by looking for common themes, strategies and resources that participants have identified.

The Right Ingredients: Wisdom from the Field

Purpose:

The Right Ingredients activity is based on lessons current and former volunteers have shared about their service experience. The wisdom activity illustrates the fundamental community development principles around the sustainability model—showing the important connections between VISTA, the workplan and the host organization.

Time: 50 minutes	
Activity	**Time**
Review sustainability model	2 min.
Go over wisdom from the field points and ask for examples	40 min.
Wrap Up	8 min.

Major Themes:

❖ Importance of merging the one-year VISTA service commitment to the host community's long-range vision.

❖ What happens to a community when you don't build a sustainable project—negative impact of short-sighted community programming.

❖ Ensuring community buy-in and involvement with the workplan.

❖ VISTAs using the time in service to find out about themselves and build a vision of what type of a community member/leader each would like to be.

Materials Needed:
  Flipchart and Markers

VISTA

New Perspective. VISTAs come into the community with optimism and energy to address an issue. They bring a new perspective to host organizations but are not always working with the same motivations (money, status) as the rest of the staff. This new perspective can be refreshing but sometimes it can be threatening to people. It's important for VISTAs to realize this and to work with staff to understand the roles and responsibility of a VISTA.

Know Yourself. It's important to realize and articulate your strengths and weaknesses. Let your supervisor know what kind of supervision you need to work effectively, what your work style is and what motivates you. It's also important to consider what your "baggage is" (stereotypes, expectations for service year). Think about how this might effect your work and what steps you can take to address these concerns.

Be Yourself. VISTAs may serve in communities they aren't familiar with or where they may be a minority (race, gender, socioeconomic). This may be challenging to the VISTA but it's important that they not apologize for or hide who they are or aren't or feel guilty about advantages they may have had that people they are working with haven't. The key to quality VISTA

Suggested Process
This section is a listing of advice from VISTA alumni. Workshop participants have a list of the key words in their Guidebook but you'll need to elaborate on them. Next to each of the key points are some suggestions of how you may want to explain alumni advice.

1. Review the VISTA Sustainability Model again and let participants know that this activity looks at the three foundations of the model: the VISTA, the workplan and the host organization.

2. Review each of the points below. Encourage participants to share examples from their project and service experience as you go and suggest that they take notes in their Guidebooks about how they could address this theme in their project.

3. Wrap up the activity by asking participants about common themes, e.g. make sure your project is community driven, important to communicate your expectations for a project. Have people go around the room and say what they've learned from the "Wisdom from the Field" session.

~

community development is being genuine. Know who you are and how you can help. Especially important early in the service term, one of the best strategies for handling a new situation is the next suggestion.

Listening. When in doubt in a new situation — listen. The VISTA's first few months of service should be spent getting to know their host organization and host community. Whether they are from the community and taking on the position of a VISTA or a person relocating to service in the community, it's really important to take the time to hear what's going on in your community. Find out how your community feels about the issue you are working on. Find out how much they know about the mission of your host organization and what they know about national service. Learn how your community operates by listening. The next tip is one of the best strategies to do this.

Pancake Breakfast Community Development. During your first couple of months of service it is really helpful to attend as many community events as possible. Pancake breakfasts, sporting events at the local schools, meetings of civic associations, hang out at the post office, spend some quality time at the local diner — find out where your community tends to gather, and spend some time getting to know people outside the walls of your host organization. Spending this time at community events builds trust and respect. People get to know who you are and what you hope to accomplish in the community. This is key to building a successful project.

The Frustration Is the Education. Service is challenging, and when it's the most difficult is probably when you are learning the most about yourself and your community. VISTAs need to understand that adversity is part of the VISTA experience, and working through these challenges is when VISTAs can learn new personal and occupational skills and endurance.

The Happiness Factor: One of the best ways to deal with the frustrating moments of a service year is to make sure that you know what's going to make you happy during your service year. Make sure that you include athletics, art — whatever tends to bring a balance to your life to your service year. VISTAs need to know what they need out of the experience to make them happy

with their service year. It's important to talk to your VISTA supervisor about what your expectations are for the year and what makes you happy. More about this during the workplan section.

Build Your Soapbox. The service year is a great opportunity to build your own soapbox. Let people know what's important to you and why. During the service year, VISTAs will find out what issues and ideas are meaningful to them and learn ways that they can tackle these issues. The service year is an empowering time and it's important to take time to reflect upon what's important to you and why.

You Get What You Give. Almost all VISTA alums will tell you that they got much more out of their service year than they gave. The year can be self-indulgent, and while the financial gains might not be there, what you learn in terms of risk taking, looking at challenging issues from different perspectives, creative problem solving and becoming empowered to make change on big issues are life-long lessons and skills. While this may not always be apparent during your service year, the benefits and impact of your VISTA experience will likely become more obvious in your post-service years.

Sustaining Service. Sustainability of service is not just about the VISTA project; it's also about the member. Hopefully, a service year will motivate members to make a life-long commitment to service.

The Workplan

Community Ecology. Find out what's been done in your community on your project's particular topic. Learn what organizations, funders and programs have been involved with your organization and your issues. Spend time learning the political and social networks of your community.

The Two-Person Rule of Thumb. To create a sustainable network that will last once the VISTA grant is over, it's important for the VISTA to have at least two people know what they are doing, where their files are, who they are talking with and the details of their programs and projects.

Direct vs. Indirect Service. It is important for VISTAs and VISTA supervisors to talk about what kind of a balance needs to be struck between the amount of direct vs. indirect service—the earlier in the service year the better. If there is a difference in opinion on this balance, it's good to bring the state office into this discussion to help clarify roles and responsibilities and how this balance relates to the workplan.

Talents and Interests. VISTAs should make sure host sites know about any talents and interests they have. Many of the workplans and VISTA job descriptions are general and may not specifically mention the need for or interest in specific talents, but most host organizations would be thrilled to know that they have a VISTA who is a photographer, a juggler, has an accounting background, is interested in welfare reform, etc. Make talents and interests known early on so that they can be incorporated into the workplan.

VISTA Vision. VISTAs have a one-year project agenda in a host community that has been there long before and will be there long after their service term. It's important for VISTAs to take the time to adjust their work tempo to the community and host organization's pace so that they don't bowl people over in the excitement of trying to complete their project in a short period of time. Workplan timelines should reflect and adjust to this concern.

Balance. When designing and reviewing a workplan, make sure there is a balance of short-term and long-term projects so that community members, VISTAs and the host organization can all see how their work is contributing to a much larger project. It's critical for people to feel a sense of success when working on a project that may take years to implement.

Don't Reinvent the Wheel. Spending time in the community helps a VISTA find out what resources are out there to help with their project. It's equally important for VISTAs to spend time finding out who else has worked on similar projects, either locally or nationally. Locally, VISTAs can meet with other nonprofits, government organizations, schools, social service networks, etc. to find out who has worked on the issue. Nationally, VISTAs can tap into the national service network to find out what other AmeriCorps projects have worked on similar projects. From any of these resources VISTAs can receive sample workplans, training suggestions, funding ideas, project forms, and what-I-would-have-done-differently advice. Spending time finding out what's out there means a VISTA can spend more time adapting and refining material to meet the unique needs of the host community.

Flexibility. The workplan is a formal agreement between the Corporation for National Service and the VISTA host organization, but it can be modified to reflect new ideas and talents the VISTA might have.

Bringing People to the Table. VISTAs should make sure they have community buy-in on their workplan. Take the time to have community meetings, put articles in the local newspaper or school newsletter letting the community know what the VISTA project is all about and inviting the community to participate in developing and implementing it. At community meetings, when you feel you have community buy-in, ask the attendees to bring one new person with them when they come to the next meeting. Community buy-in is an ongoing process, so it's important to keep involving new people. The broader the community support base you have for your project, the more likely it is to succeed and sustain itself after the VISTA grant is up.

You Come on the Shoulders of Others. This is an old religious saying meaning that your work is supported by those who have come before you and that future of your project also rests on what is accomplished during your service term. Be sure to document what you've done, why you did it, who you worked with and where the program could head. When VISTAs leave a program, it's important for them to help the new VISTA, volunteer, or staff member orient themselves to the program. VISTAs can: write a letter of introduction for the person who will be taking over their work, create a binder of project materials, list grant opportunities that are coming up, leave a list of important contact people and information about how they have been involved in the project, and help outline an orientation for the new person.

Host Site & Community

Gate Keepers. Every community has people who know the inter-workings of the community. These people know the history of the community, how to approach people about new ideas and are often looked to by the community to give the thumbs up or down to new ideas and people. Find out who these people are in your host community and find out what their thoughts are on your project.

Community Education and Empowerment. VISTAs work on difficult issues that often feel insurmountable to the general public. When working with your host community to educate them about the issue you area addressing make sure that you provide them an opportunity to take action on it. For example, if you are talking to a community member about a recent increase in homelessness in your community, mention that the food bank could really use some more food donations and perhaps the next time they go shopping they could pick up a couple of things to donate to the food bank. Give people a tangible way to help a problem that may seem too huge or too depressing for them to get involved in. Personalize the impact of their donations—be sure to let people know how their actions will help address the problem in specific, localized terms, for example "Thanks so much for your donation that will feed a local family for a week."

Progressive Responsibility. Once your community members are aware of your issue and how they can help, slowly give them increased responsibility on the issue. A person might start out purchasing food for the food bank, then helping with distribution, then writing a letter to the editor talking about an upcoming fundraiser for the food bank and eventually wind up managing the public relations committee for your organization. Tap into people's talents and have them bring what they are comfortable with to your organization. Review material produced by volunteers and try to avoid changing much of it—it's their story and you can learn a lot from their new perspective. By building up individual responsibility you increase the sustainability of the project as well as increase community buy in.

The Invisible VISTA. When running a program, ask yourself, "What is this going to look like when I'm not here?" Think about what it's going to take for your work to become invisible. Do you need to recruit more volunteers? Do you need to find funding to hire a project manager? Do you need to develop a partnership with another organization to help support the program? The goal of a good VISTA experience is to work yourself out of a job.

Partnerships. One of the best ways to sustain a project is to make sure you have built cross sector partnerships. Looks for different ways to include members from the public and private sector in your project. Think of ways that your program benefits the local bank, the local hardware store, the Mayor's office, the parent-teacher association, nonprofits etc. and meet with these organizations to discuss how they can become involved in your work. Make sure to add people to newsletter lists, holiday card mailing, special events, this adds to their sense of inclusion and connection to the project.

Thanks Yous. The power thank you notes is immeasurable. It's important to let the community know how they have helped and how their assistance has positively affected the community. Thank you notes let people know that they were appreciated, that they can help tackle challenging issues and helps pave the way for the next time you need to go to the community for resources.

Trust. Trust is the key factor in developing lasting relationships and creating change within a community. Trust is the most powerful community development tool you have as a VISTA.

Finding the Kettle that Works for You :
Dot Activity

Purpose:

This activity illustrates the concept of paradigms and how they influence our problem-solving skills.

Major Themes:

❖Learning how to think outside of the box

❖ Creative problem solving for challenging community problems

Time: 20 *minutes*	
Activity	**Time**
Read instructions and participants work on dot exercise	5 min.
Review solutions	5 min.
Paradigm discussion	10 min.
Community paradigm discussion	10 min.

Materials Needed:
  Flipchart and Markers

Suggested Process

1. Read the instructions to the dot activity: "Below are nine dots in the shape of a square. Try to connect all nine dots using only four straight lines and without picking up your pen/pencil." Have participants complete the activity on in their guidebook. Two possible solutions to the activity are shown here.
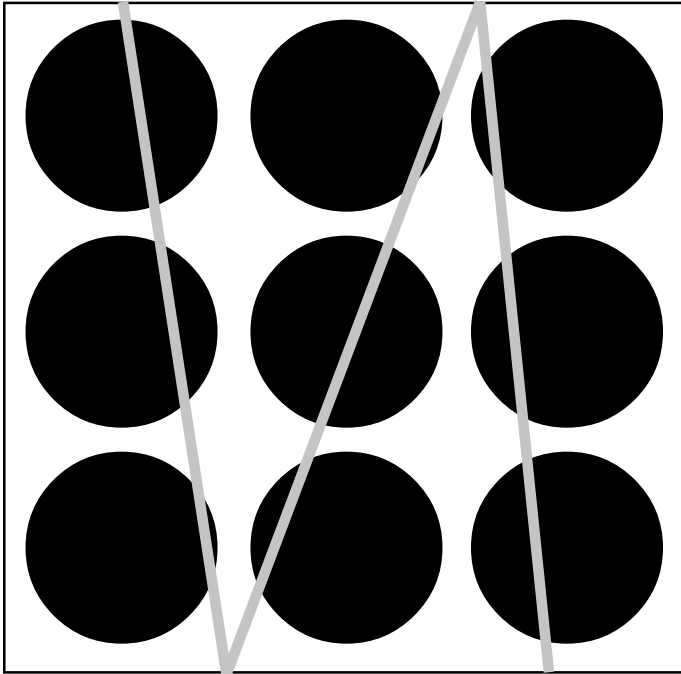
2. Ask if anyone has a solution to the puzzle.

3. Post the solutions to the puzzle.

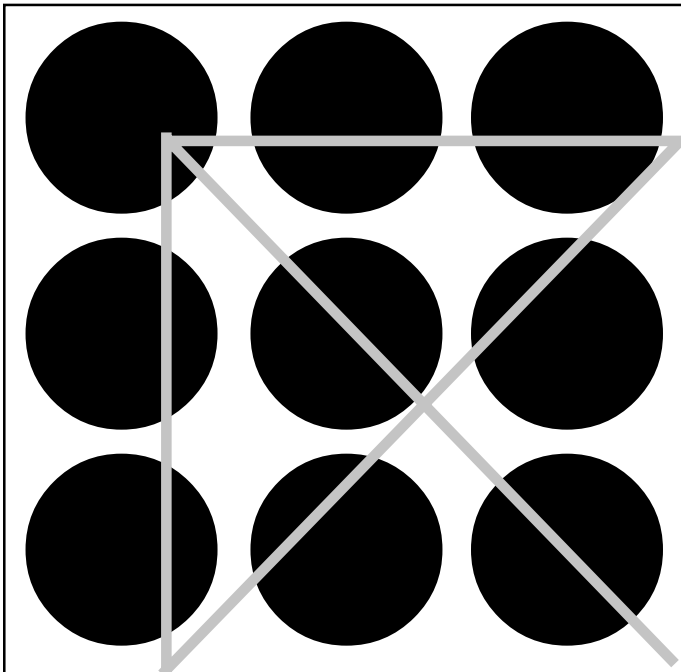Some examples of paradigms that you might want to use are:

❖**A sports paradigm**. Bill Boomer, a soccer coach, attended his son's swim practice. While watching his son do a flip turn he asked "Why do you do it that way? Wouldn't it be faster to try it this way?" The swim coach had never thought about a different way of trying a flip turn because, "That was the way we've always done it." Boomer, with an athletic background but a swimming novice, was able to look outside the box and see how the flip turn could be improved. With this comment Boomer revolutionized the flip turn, becomes a swim coach and ultimately winds up as a coach for the US Olympic swim team.

❖**A business paradigm.** A Swiss watchmaker went to his superiors with an idea for a digital watch. His superiors responded, "Digital, no; we are known for our classic style of traditional watches. This is the way we've always made watches and we won't change our methods." That spring at the world watch convention a small Japanese watch company unveiled a digital watch and thus digital timing and the Casio company was born.

4. Talk about the how the box around the dots serves as a paradigm, e.g., "The box is there, therefore we feel we must stay within its lines." Community development is often like this and VISTAs are in a position to ask "Why do you do things this way?" and to suggest different approaches. Give some examples of paradigms and ask participants for paradigms in their community.

5. Brainstorm with participants about what paradigms exist in their communities. Write responses on the flipchart. Brainstorm with participants on ways to address these paradigms and write responses on the flipchart. Wrap up the session by asking VISTAs how they could use some of these strategies in their projects.

❖ **A community development paradigm**. A VISTA was looking for pro-bono dental care for low-income, uninsured families. Every week she called the local dentist in town and say, "Would you please donate services to our organization?" Every week the dentist said no. One week the VISTA noticed the dentist outside of his office building raking the pine cones from the office yard. When the VISTA stopped to chat, the dentist complained about how he spent so much time picking up pinecones and that he really disliked the task. The next week when the VISTA called to ask the dentist to help, she said, "If you'll donate three hours a month to our dental care program, I'll make sure that your office lawn is clear of pine cones." So a successful barter was born. The nonprofit the VISTA worked for was in charge of supervising youth community service hours (for first-time juvenile offenders) and twice a month three youths went to the dentist office to clear his lawn of pinecones. The youth knew that their work was meaningful and that people in the community would benefit from their labor, the dentist was thrilled with his clean lawn as well as with the nonprofit and youths' work and became a business mentor (another of the nonprofit's programs) to at-risk students.

Setting the Table: Sustainability Workplan Exercise

Purpose:

This session applies what's been learned in earlier sessions to participants' workplans. The session provides participants with a way to outline and organize their project workplan.

Major Theme:

Developing a specific plan to ensure that the VISTA workplan is sustained once the VISTA grant is completed.

Time: 1 hour and 20 minutes	
Activity	**Time**
Overview of exercise and review sample workplan	15 min.
Participants develop their own workplan	50 min.
Report back and wrap-up	15 min.

Materials Needed:

Flipchart sheet of paper per participant

Magic Markers

Sample Sustainability Workplan (either use the sample included or create one for your own project)

Suggested Process

1. Introduce the session as an opportunity for participants to organize their service year and to think about ways to ensure that their work is sustainable.
2. Review the sample sustainability workplan. You can use the one below or develop your own. Depending upon your audience, participants might want to take a different approach to writing up the workplan. VISTA might want to write up a plan for their project, VISTA Leaders might want to write a plan that coordinates the efforts of all of the VISTAs on a project and a site supervisor might want to write a workplan that integrates the VISTAs work with the organization's efforts.
3. Start from the top down on the workplan. The first section is sustainability statement. The sustainability statement should be a two or three line sentence that states what program the VISTA wants to sustain and how the VISTA will accomplish this task.
4. Next, brainstorm on the big ideas behind the project. Are you working to increase community involvement? Are you working towards social justice issues? Are you trying to improve the reading skills of every fourth grader in a certain school district? Brainstorm about what the principles and philosophy behind the program that the VISTA is working on.
5. Once the big ideas have been laid out, think about who needs to be involved to make these ideas a reality—your stakeholders. It's good to remind people that the clients and the board of an organization are important to include in the process.
6. After the stakeholders have been identified, participants should begin to outline the project components and what needs to happen and when. Break the project into workable tasks and make sure that each stakeholder group is involved throughout the process.
7. You may not have time for participants to complete their timeline. Make sure people have their sustainability statement, the big ideas, stakeholders identified and can talk about what the program will look like after the VISTA grant is over. There is a reporting form in the participant's guidebook that maybe helpful to help participants structure their report.
8. Participants will have one minute to present their sustainability plan. Remind participants that they should be clear, concise and committed. Studies indicate that people make up their mind on whether or not they will donate services and/or time within the first sixty seconds of hearing someone's appeal, so it's important to keep it brief and to be clear about your project (remind participants that it's always okay for them to pass if they'd rather not share all or part of what they've written.)
9. Wrap up the activity by encouraging participants to continue working on the workplan and to make an appointment with their supervisor to discuss and review the plan when they go back to work.

Instructions as listed in Participant's Guide

Using the template (page 45), please fill in the timeline starting with today's date and ending with the last month of your service year.

1. In the upper left-hand corner of the timeline write your sustainability statement. Your sustainability statement should say what program you plan to develop or sustain and how you will go about doing that. For example "The Springsteen Day Center will be a daytime shelter for the residents of Springsteen Township with medical, food, and legal facilities for participants. The Day Center will be managed by a full-time staff member, a corps of volunteers and clients." Make sure you outline what issue the program addresses, what services it provides and who will run the program when the VISTA grant is completed.

2. In the upper half of the template please write responses to the following questions about the Big Ideas:
   - a. What are the goals of your project?
   - b. What social justice ideas does your project address?
   - c. What impact do you want your project to have on your host community?
   - d. What will motivate people to become involved with your project?
   - e. What do you want to learn from the experience?

3. Identifying your stakeholders. Who needs to be involved in the project for it to become sustainable? Potential stakeholders could be your supervisor, your organization's board, clients, specific community organizations, etc. In the bottom left corner of your timeline list each stakeholder group in a different color.

4. Breaking Down the Big Ideas into Project Components:
   Once you've got your big ideas then begin to organize them into projects.
   - a. What are the projects within each big idea?
   - b. What are the components of the project?
   - c. Who would like to serve as the coordinator for each projects?
   - d. What does a timetable look like for each projects?
   - e. Could any of these projects work together to share resources?
   - f. Deadlines for project components.

g. How will you communicate your plan to others (clients, media, funders, etc.)?

h. How will you evaluate your program?

i. How will you address sustainability in your project?

Once you have discussed these components begin outlining your project on the timeline. Place project deadlines in one color and place the lead person for each component in another color and resource people in yet another color.

Things to keep in mind while writing up project timeline:

a. What resources are needed?

b. What resources could be shared?

c. What training might be helpful?

d. Are there potential partners who are not yet involved with the project?

Most important, what does your project look like at the end of your service year when you are no longer there?

Reporting Back

Participants will have one minute to report back on their workplan. In that minute make sure they observe the three report-back Cs: **Clear, Concise and Committed**. In the one minute report. The report should cover the following four topics:

1. Their sustainability statement;

2. A few of their Big Ideas;

3. Who their stakeholders are; and

4. What the project will look like when there is no longer a VISTA grant supporting the program.

Sample Sustainability Workplan

Sustainability Statement: *The Springsteen Day Center will be a daytime shelter for the residents of Springsteen township with medical, food, and legal facility for participants. The Day Center will be managed by a full time staff member and a corps of volunteers and clients.*

The Big Ideas
Community enlightenment on the issue of homelessness
Hope
Individualized care
Trust
One-stop-shop for client services
Social Justice
Dignity

Mobilize community resources
Quality Care
Client Empowerment
Safe Place
Compassion
Action
Collaboration

Stakeholders	January	March	May	July	September	November
VISTAs	Outline day center program. identify stakeholders	Organize community meeting to discuss Day Center	Fundraiser/ Service project for Day Center	Recruit program staff (paid and volunteer to run programs in Day Center	Recruit and train volunteers to run Day Center	Organize grand opening of Day Center
Supervisor	Inform and involve board	Identify and apply for long term funding to support the Day Center.	Develop program delivery strategy for the Day Center	Work with local nonprofit network to develop a referral service for the Day Center	Hire full time staff person to run the Day Center	Take your VISTAs out for a celebratory dinner
Clients	Review program outline	Participate in community meeting	Serve as project captains for service project	Help develop recruitment material.	Run client panel as part of training	Help organize and attend grand opening
Community members	Letter to the editor regarding increase in homelessness	Attend community meeting and volunteer for Day Center committee	Attend fundraiser/ service project with 2 friends	Identify and contact 3 local businesses for donations to the Center	Run a volunteer session on community resources	Attend grand opening and are awarded "Volunteer of the Year"

Soup for the Soul: VISTA Vision

Purpose:

This session provides participants with time to reflect upon what it is they want to sustain, personally and project-wise, from their service experience.

Major Theme:

Write a personal vision statement by articulating what you want to accomplish during your service experience.

Time: 35 minutes	
Activity	**Time**
Review vision statements	10 min.
Participants write vision statements	15 min.
Report back and wrap up	10 min.

Materials Needed:

Signs with sample vision statements on them (see followingpages)

1 stone per participant

Please write down your vision statement for your service year. Some things to consider when writing your vision statement

❖What kind of a person do you want to be during and after your service?
❖ What legacy do you want to leave in your community?
❖Do you want to sustain your commitment to service and if so how?
❖ What words/actions/people serve as a reminder for the kind of person you want to be?

Some examples of famous vision statements are:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.
~Margaret Mead

What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.
~Ralph Waldo Emerson

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Don't complain.
~Maya Angelou

We must be the change we wish to see in the world.
~Ghandi

Suggested Process
1. Ask participants to write a vision statement for their service year. The questions below are in the participant book and can help frame the vision statement.

2. Have those participants who are willing to share their vision statements read them out loud.

3. Wrap up the activity and the sustainability training by giving each participant a stone to symbolizes their personal **Stone Soup** stone.

4. Be sure to reference the material in the back of the participant book. Also, for the training to be sustainable, encourage participants to use the sustainability workshop material to train other volunteers and/or staff members.

The only thing you take with you when you're gone is what you leave behind.
~John Allston

He who has done his best for his own time has lived for all times.
~Johann von Schiller

Go to the People,
Live with them,
Learn from them,
Love them.
Start with what they know,
Build with what they have.

And with the best leaders
When the work is done
*   the task accomplished*
The people will say,
"We have done this ourselves."
~Lao Tse

I hope, believe, and dream that national service will remain throughout the life of America, not a series of promises, but a series of challenges, across all generations and all walks of life, to help us rebuild this beautiful but troubled land.
~ President Bill Clinton

Some examples of VISTA vision statements are:

Every night when I go to sleep I dream of a new world but in the morning I wake up to start to build it.
~Juan Carlos Gastón, Mayagüez Children's Library, Puerto Rico

United in service AmeriCorps we stand. Volunteering our lives where there is demand. We strive to leave the world better than it was before. Dedicated to "Getting things Done," We are AmeriCorps!
~Thor Midby, American Red Cross, Los Angeles, California

I will see it, become it, plan it, fix it, sustain it.
~Shirley Johnson, YorkCAN, York, Pennsylvania

It is human nature to want to help, but not everyone knows how. I want to dedicate my time and energy into being the example to those that are looking for some answers.
~Heather Luker, Utah Campus Compact, Salt Lake City, Utah

Washing the Dishes: Wrap Up and Evaluation

Sample Workshop Evaluation
Date of Training
Name of Trainer
1. Please circle what type of project you are working on:
health   education   environment   public safety
unmet human needs.

2. How many months have you been a (VISTA, VISTA Leader, VISTA Supervisor, CNS Staff member)?

3. On a scale of 1-5 (1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree) please rate the following:

    a. The training content was appropriate to my project/ individual needs.

        1   2   3   4   5

    b. The training gave me time to develop a sustainability strategy for my project.

        1   2   3   4   5

    c. The training gave me a better understanding about project sustainability.

        1   2   3   4   5

    d. The training gave me a better understanding about sustaining my service commitment past my service term.

        1   2   3   4   5

    e. I would be interested in additional sustainability trainings.

        1   2   3   4   5

4. What portion of the training was most helpful to you and why:

5. What portion of the training was least helpful to you and why?

6. Were your expectations for the training met?

7. Other comments about this training or suggestions for future trainings:

Thanks for your participation.

A few things you'll want to cover during the wrap-up portion of the training:

1. Review the expectation list and see if participants believe expectations for the training were met.

2. Review the resource material in the back of the Participant Guide.

3. Remind participants that they can receive helpful CNS resources at <www.etr.org> (resource materials, training guides, tools to help with fundraising, etc.)

4. If you are willing, make up a participant list with contact information so that participants can keep in touch and share resources.

5. Ask participants to complete a workshop evaluation.

Stone Soup Training Module: Sustaining the AmeriCorps*VISTA Experience

Participant's Guide

Icebreaker: Weaving a Web

Purpose:
This icebreaker is a good opportunity for participants to get to know one another's talents, projects, service concerns and desires.

Major Themes:
❖Sustainability means building a network of resources.

❖Bartering can be an important tool for bringing together resources you need for your project.

❖Fellow VISTA projects/staff are excellent resources of information and materials. You aren't alone in your VISTA experience; there are lots of people and resources out there to assist you.

Please complete the following statements on your index cards:
❖On the first index card, please write three talents or resources that you and/or your organization/host community have. Think about talents or resources that you have that you can barter with other community organizations or individuals. Some examples are: you are a great grant writer, you can juggle, your nonprofit has a lending library with 1,000 books in it, etc.

❖On the second card please write one challenge you face this year with your project and name at least two resources that would help you overcome this challenge.

❖On the third card please complete the following sentence, "The footprint I want to leave in my community is…"

Getting into the Mix

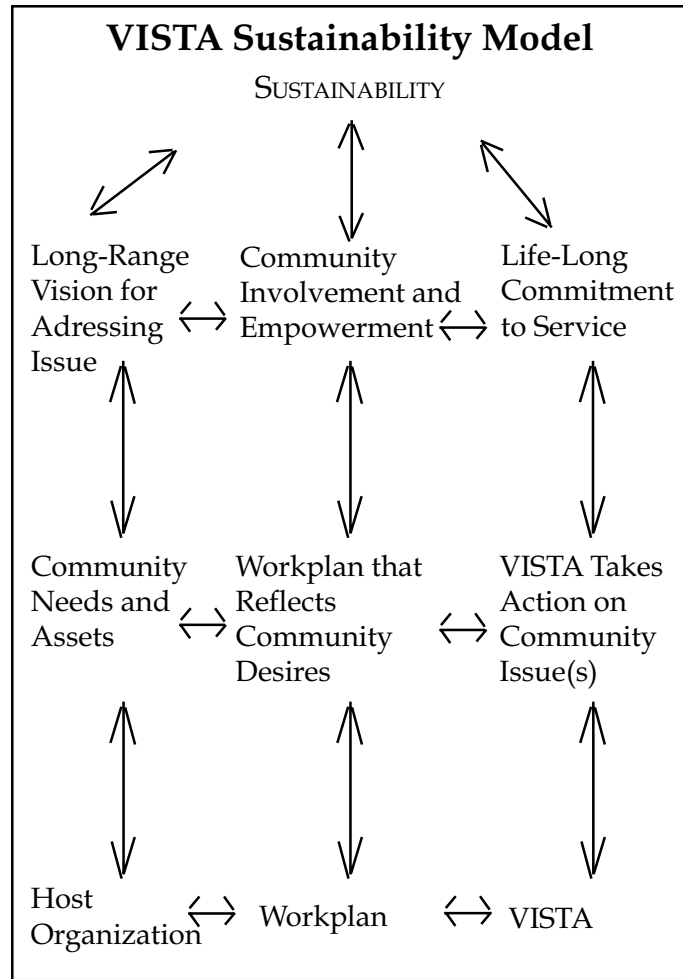**Purpose:** This session illustrates sustainability and how it relates to the VISTA experience.

Major Themes:

❖Duality of sustainability (both for projects and VISTAs)

❖Illustration of how the VISTA, the project workplan and the host site must all work together to achieve sustainability.

❖VISTAs as catalysts for social change.

The Story of Stone Soup

A hungry peddler comes upon a town in famine. While looking for a place to have dinner the peddler meets up with the town blacksmith. When the peddler asks where he might partake in a meal, the blacksmith said "You'll find no food here, all the townspeople have hoarded their food and will not share with one another, especially not a stranger."   To this the peddler declared that he had all the ingredients for a wonderful meal and that he would cook for the famine-ridden town. The peddler asked if he could borrow a kettle from the blacksmith and began to build a fire. When the blacksmith returned with the kettle they filled it with water and waited for it to boil. When the water began to boil the peddler reached deep into his coat pocket and pulled out a simple stone. He dropped the stone into the kettle of boiling water and leaned over the kettle and sniffed the air, licked his lips and declared that this was to be one of the best batches of stone soup he ever made. The townspeople began to gather around the kettle to see what this peddler was cooking up. Curiosity and hunger broke the silence of one townsman who said, "Stone soup is good, but it's even better with potatoes." Another villager shouted out, "What you really needed are quality carrots." And with that the villagers went to their respective homes, brought out the best food in their cabinets and dropped it in the pot. After all of the villagers had eaten the marvelous stone soup, they offered to purchase the stone. The peddler replied that he couldn't take money for the stone and left it for the townspeople. Years after the famine had passed, villagers could still be heard bragging about how wonderful their community's stone soup was.

<div align="right">~Old Russian Folk Tale</div>

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              VISTA Sustainability Model               │
│                                                       │
│                    SUSTAINABILITY                     │
│                                                       │
│        ↗                  ↑↓                  ↖        │
│                                                       │
│  Long-Range      Community            Life-Long       │
│  Vision for      Involvement and      Commitment      │
│  Adressing  ↔    Empowerment ↔        to Service      │
│  Issue                                                │
│      ↑↓              ↑↓                  ↑↓            │
│                                                       │
│                                                       │
│  Community       Workplan that        VISTA Takes     │
│  Needs and       Reflects             Action on       │
│  Assets     ↔    Community       ↔    Community       │
│                  Desires              Issue(s)        │
│      ↑↓              ↑↓                  ↑↓            │
│                                                       │
│                                                       │
│  Host                                                 │
│  Organization ↔  Workplan        ↔    VISTA           │
│                                                       │
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American Heritage Dictionary *definition of sustainability:* 1. To keep in existence; maintain. 2. To supply with necessities or nourishment; provide for. 3. To support from below; prop.   4. To support the spirits, vitality, or resolution of; encourage. 5. To affirm the validity or justice of. 6. To prove or corroborate; confirm.

American Heritage Dictionary *definition of vista:* 1. A distant view seen through an opening. A comprehensive awareness of a series of remembered, present or anticipated events.

Making Out the Menu: Two Tales of Sustainability

Purpose:
This session illustrates how sustainability was addressed in two VISTA projects, one where sustainability occurred and one where it did not. Both stories are based on strategies used by former VISTAs projects.

Major Themes:
❖The importance of the workplan

❖Communication between VISTAs, site supervisor and state office staff.

❖The impact of achieving or not achieving sustainability can have upon a community.

Sandy Beach Housing Corporation
Cast of Characters:
Gwen: Acting Director of Sandy Beach Housing Corporation
John: Locally Recruited VISTA
Penny: Nationally Recruited VISTA
Phyllis: Sandy Beach Housing Corporation Secretary

Located in a small town in the rural Northeast, Sandy Beach Housing Corporation's (SBC) mission is to provide quality housing opportunities to the low-income residents of a three-county area. Recently, SBC has gone through some administrative changes. The executive director of twenty years retired, the office manager took a job with a local bank and the board chair stepped down because the time commitment was becoming too much of a strain on him. With several large housing grants pending and the construction of ten new housing units, SBC faced lots of interesting work.

When the acting director, Gwen, took over, she had several new projects that she wanted SBC to take on. One of the first applications Gwen submitted was to AmeriCorps*VISTA. SBC applied for three VISTAs: one economic development coordinator, one community outreach coordinator and one volunteer coordinator. The goal of the VISTA grant was develop an economic development program for SBC's clients. SBC was new to small-business ventures but Gwen felt it was important for SBC to diversify its activities.

SBC recruited two VISTAs, one national and one local to fill two of the slots; the third slot remained unfilled. When the VISTAs, John and Penny, started Gwen was away at a housing training and so the SBC secretary, Phyllis, told the VISTAs to take the first week they were in town to "settle in."

When Gwen returned, she met with the VISTAs and reviewed some of the upcoming SBC projects. There were a couple of grants due, SBC's annual fundraiser to organize and an annual report to write, publish and distribute. Gwen told the VISTAs that because SBC was low on staff right now that she'd really appreciate it if they could pitch in and help out until they were able to increase staff. John and Penny agreed and split the project work for the annual report, the logistics for the fundraiser and drafting two of the grants.

When John and Penny asked Gwen when they might have access to a computer and phone, they were told to share with the Phyllis and, "If you do well with that application to the Lagios Foundation, we'll be able to purchase a new computer and put in another phone line!"

That afternoon Penny and John sat down to try and organize their work. Penny would draft the grants and find entertainment for the fundraiser. John said he would take on the fundraiser raffle, draft and find a printer for the annual report.

John and Penny asked Phyllis where they could find past annual reports and grants so that they could get a sense of what SBC had done before. Phyllis found a few grant applications for housing projects (the two grants Penny was working on were for small business) and an annual report from 1996. Working with what she had Penny drafted two grant proposals, John edited them and then they submitted them to Gwen. When Gwen had a chance to review the grants she said "Nice first draft, but I don't think the grants capture what we are trying to accomplish with

our micro-enterprise program." When Penny asked for some suggestions and direction about how she could revise the grants, Gwen told her that she didn't have time to go over it with her this week and that she should be focusing her efforts on the SBC fundraiser. Penny put the grants aside and went in search of band for the fundraiser.

John had a similar experience when he met with Gwen to talk about the fundraiser and the annual report. He told Gwen he was finding it difficult to elicit donations for the fundraiser raffle because he often didn't have access to a phone. He said his big accomplishment was getting a local restaurant to donate a gourmet meal for four. Gwen was annoyed that John had gone to the restaurant owners because they were large donors to SBC and said it wasn't appropriate to ask them to donate additional goods. Gwen picked up the phone, called the restaurant owners and apologized for the request, citing that, "John is a new volunteer and doesn't know better."

Disappointed but not deterred, the VISTAs continued to work on their projects. Penny found a local band to play at the fundraiser and John finished a draft of the annual report and had twenty items donated for the raffle. Both John and Gwen attended the fundraiser and had a chance to meet community members who were involved in SBC activities. The typical questions from the evening were "What's a VISTA?" or "Are you taking over the office manager's position?" At the end of the night, SBC had raised $5,000 from raffle and dinner ticket sales. John and Penny were thrilled that their hard work had helped SBC.

Over the weekend, one of SBC's housing units had major water damage and five families were without homes. Gwen called John and Penny and asked them to help with clean up and to try and find temporary housing for the families. John and Penny spent the next week tracking down housing options for the families, getting food and clothing to them, helping with insurance claims, and finding furniture for the families. At the end of the week all of the families were situated in temporary housing and had their basic needs met. The following Monday, Penny realized that one of the grants was due by the end of the week. She spent two days trying to get an appointment with Gwen and when they did meet Gwen said she would review the drafts and get back to her. On Friday morning Gwen rushed into the office and told John, Phyllis and Penny to drop everything. "We need to re-do the grant and get it to the post office by five o'clock and if we run later, someone

can drive to Federal Express in the city and we'll have until ten o'clock." Gwen said as she rushed to find the latest draft of Penny's grant on her desk. For the next eleven hours everyone in the office ran around copying material, tracking down board members for signatures, calling local agencies for letters of support and revising the program goals for the micro-enterprise program. Penny took the grant to Federal Express, paid the mailing charges with her own money and headed home.

The next month was challenging for the VISTAs. When a crisis arose they had lots of work to do but when there wasn't a crisis they didn't have any specific projects to work on. They tried meeting with Gwen who was very busy with a capital campaign and didn't have a lot of time to give to give them When she did meet with them she told them, "Hang in there, when we get those grants, we'll have lots of work to do!"

When it came time to write the first quarterly report, Gwen asked the VISTAs to draft it. As they reviewed the AmeriCorps grant material they realized that the report was based on a workplan for their project which they had never seen. Both John and Penny were unhappy with their placement and decided that they would meet with Gwen to discuss their concerns. Gwen canceled the meeting twice because of other obligations, and when she was able to meet with the VISTAs they were fired up. "Why has it taken two and a half months to see this workplan?" John asked. "This workplan doesn't even mention grant writing!" said Penny. Gwen was surprised by the VISTAs' reaction and said that she would take some time to review the workplan and come up with projects for them to work on.

The following week Gwen gave the VISTAs a list of projects for the economic development program. The two projects Gwen wanted the VISTAs to work on were to run an interest session to find out how many local residents might be interested in participating in the program and to find local business people who would be willing to serve as mentors for the project. John and Penny went to work organizing advertising an information session and began contacting local business people to find out if they would participate. Fifteen residents showed up for the meeting and were very interested in the potential of the program. Some residents began asking if SBC could help them get computers or if they could help with small loans and others, current business owners, wanted to know if this kind of work was going was going to affect their business. John and Penny took notes and asked if residents would be willing to attend a follow-up meeting to discuss their

concerns and questions and update them on the progress of the economic development program. After the meeting Gwen said that John and Penny should hold off on the next meeting until they found out whether or not they had won the economic development grant funds.

For the next month, the VISTAs continued to do crisis work here and there and Gwen continued to rush around trying to manage all of the SBC projects. Just before Thanksgiving SBC received word that they had not been awarded either economic development grant. At this point, John and Penny decided to call the state office and resign. The state program officer, Ken, was surprised by their decision because this was the first he had heard of their concerns. Ken offered to do a site visit and meet with Gwen, but both of the VISTAs felt that they were too disenchanted with SBC to stay.

Penny decided to take another VISTA position at a literacy project in California; John stayed in town and was accepted at the local college for a degree in business.

Gwen was named permanent executive director of the Sandy Beach Corporation and is thinking of applying for RSVP volunteers to help out with office work. The economic development program was never pursued further.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

❖How did this story make you feel? or How do you think the VISTAs felt in this situation?

❖What impact does a project that isn't sustained have upon a community, a host organization and the VISTAs?

❖How might the situation have been changed? What could the supervisor or the VISTAs done to have improved the situation?

Yates Literacy Council

Cast Of Characters:

Stephen: Yates Literacy council's Executive Director

Carlos: Locally recruited VISTA

Susan: Locally Recruited VISTA

Ed: Nationally Recruited VISTA

Penny: Nationally Recruited VISTA

Jenn: Stephen's Replacement

Carla: Ed's Mentor

Yates Literacy Council (YLC) is located in Morrison, a suburb of San Francisco. Established fifty years ago to help immigrants increase their language skills, YLC has expanded its efforts to include tutoring programs for children, citizenship classes and job readiness programs. YLC's director of the past five years, Stephen, applied for a VISTA grant to expand YLC's tutoring program so that each of the five local schools in the district would have their own site-based program. Stephen applied for four VISTAs: two program coordinators, one grant writer and one volunteer coordinator to help implement these "satellite sites." Two local people, Carlos and Susan, were recruited as VISTAs and two national recruits Ed and Penny, who had transferred there from Sandy Beach.

When the VISTAs arrived, Stephen ran a week-long orientation program for them. The orientation included an overview of YLC's history, programs and administrative policies, a tour of Morrison, an interagency nonprofit meeting, an intercorps council meeting with other local AmeriCorps members, a client panel where participants discussed their experience with YLC, a meeting with school administrators and reading teachers and a day when VISTAs reviewed the goals and objectives of their workplans and discussed expectations, roles and responsibilities. The week ended with a dinner with board members and YLC volunteers. At the dinner, VISTA was assigned to a mentor whose role was to introduce the VISTA to the community and help the VISTAs with their project.

Penny and Ed, the nationally recruited VISTAs who had relocated to serve, spent some time with their mentors finding affordable apartments, learning where to

shop and bank and generally getting the lay of the land. Over the next month all of the VISTAs were encouraged to attend a series of community events from the Morrison Elk's Club Chili Cook-off to the local peewee soccer tournament. At these events, VISTAs met community leaders and learned a great deal about how the town felt about YLC and its programs.

During weekly VISTA staff meetings Stephen reviewed the progress of the VISTAs on their individual projects and assessed what resources they needed and wanted. In the second VISTA meeting Stephen addressed the issue of sustainability by talking with the VISTAs about what they want their projects to look like in a year. "Who is going to participate? Who is going to run it? How is it going to be ? These are questions you should be asking yourself daily," said Stephen. "The goal is to work yourself out of a job. I know that might sound odd, but you need to make sure there are resources and networks in place before you go so that all of you work doesn't end when you leave. The other thing you need to think about is what you need to be effective this year. It's important that you let me know what resources you need to so that you can complete your workplan." Over the next week each of the VISTAs thought about what type of training and resources they thought would be helpful to them. Carlos wanted to attend a grant-writing seminar, Penny found a nonprofit program development workshop offered by a national technical assistance provider, Ed wanted to attend a literacy conference in San Francisco and Susan decided to take Spanish lessons at the Morrison Community College. Stephen worked with each VISTA to make it possible to participate in these events.

YLC's office manager became rather ill and had to take a medical leave from work. In his absence, each of the YLC staff members was asked to take a shift covering the phones and helping with clerical duties. In the staff meeting Stephen asked if each VISTAs would be willing to cover a slot, noting that he was covering the Wednesday 1-2:30 p.m. slot and Friday 9-10 a.m.. Penny was hesitant at first to do this when she worked at Sandy Beach she often had to do clerical work and it often wound up taking up all of her time. Penny was really excited about the satellite program the VISTAs were developing and didn't want her year to be detoured by office coverage. After the meeting she voiced her concers to Stephen, "You know I'm feeling like this year is going by really quickly and I'm concerned that I have enough

time to do the work laid out in my workplan. Is office coverage necessary for the VISTAs?" Stephen thought for a moment and replied, "I appreciate your concern and commitment. A year is a short time to take on such a project. Office coverage isn't mandatory but it would help out. If you feel you have the time to cover a slot that would be great. If you don't have the time I'll respect your decision." Penny took one slot on Thursdays for the month duration of the office manager's leave and wound up getting to know several staff members better and learning the office filing, phone and computer system. She thought this wasn't the preferred way of doing things but she was glad she could help out and that it didn't last long.

Setting up the school-based satellite programs was going really well. Carlos, the fundraiser, had met with a local foundation that had donated $1,000 to get the programs started. A large bookstore chain offered ten boxes of remaindered books that the VISTAs thought might be useful to their project and his mentor, the head of the local Kiwanis Club offered the proceeds of their Christmas tree sales to the project. Susan, the volunteer coordinator, was organizing a volunteer fair and was in the process of designing a volunteer program that would suit YLC's needs. Penny and Ed were working together to find space in each of the five schools and to develop a program schedule for the schools. They had bimonthly meetings with the high school principals and reading teachers to update them on the progress of the program.

As the weeks progressed the VISTAs really got to know one another's talents and strengths. When Ed commented that one of the school satellite rooms was really dull and depressing Susan chimed in "Well, I used to paint murals. What do you think about me painting something in the room?" In a staff meeting Carlos said he was feeling as if he was always begging for money and that he was afraid that any time a community member saw him they thought that he would ask them for a donation and run the other way. Penny said that she'd like to try a little fundraising and put some of the skills she learned in the community development workshop into practice. Carlos, an avid rollerblader, befriended a group of teen skaters and convinced them that they should sign up as YLC volunteers. He made it "cool" to volunteer and increased Susan's volunteer base by fifteen members.

Stephen set up a mid-year evaluation meeting with each of the VISTAs to find out where the VISTAs were with their projects, what resources they needed, review and re-evaluate the goals and objectives in the workplan and to find out what each of the VISTAs planned on doing after their service year. The first question Stephen asked was, "What are you doing as far as sustaining your project?" Carlos had found three funders to make five-year commitment to the satellite program. Susan said she had drafted a training manual and developed a volunteer database so that YLC staff members or a lead volunteer could run the program if need be. Ed and Penny said that they were working with each of the schools to formalize the partnerships to develop a long-range vision for the program—one that did not include VISTAs. The other question Stephen asked was "What are you thinking about doing after your service year is over?" None of the VISTAs had a clear idea of what they wanted to do so Stephen suggested that they tap into a partnership he had set up with the career services office at the local college. One of the career counselors offered to meet with each of the VISTAs to set up a post-service plan of action. The career center was willing to let the VISTAs use their library, let them attend career fairs and followed up with calls and meetings as needed.

In a staff meeting two months before the grand opening of the satellite schools, Stephen told the VISTAs that he had been offered a job at a local foundation. "It's a great opportunity, I can really help the nonprofit community in this position—I just can't turn it down," he said. Stephen told the VISTAs that YLC's assistant director, Jenn, would be taking over supervision of the VISTA program. Stephen said that he would give her an orientation to the VISTA projects and would appreciate the VISTAs input and participation in the process. While the VISTAs were disappointed by Stephen's departure, they understood his decision and immediately started thinking of a proposal that they could submit to the foundation as soon as he started.

The week before Stephen left, Ed received a call from his father saying that his mother was very ill and he was needed at home. Ed's family owned a small hardware store in Florida. With his mother ill they really needed Ed to come back and help out. Stephen and Jenn worked with the state office to arrange for Ed's trip home and to close out his service. At Ed's going away party, Ed's mentor

Carla, said, "In a short time you've done so much for us. I hope that you'll always consider Morrison a second home. Thank you for your service." The other VISTAs presented Ed with a box of macaroni and cheese and a can of beans so he wouldn't forget the staple VISTA diet.

Jenn's first week as the VISTA supervisor was a challenging one. The satellite school sites were a month away from opening and there was a lot of work to do. The VISTAs' morale was low because of Ed and Stephen leaving. Jenn decided to have a staff retreat and closed the office for a day and took everyone to a conference facility owned by the college. The staff spent the morning doing team-building activities and in the afternoon they developed a team strategy for the next six months of projects. In her journal that night, Penny wrote, "I learned a lot about leadership skills today. The ropes course was really challenging but by the end of it my trust and respect for the staff grew so much. The whole experience taught me a lot about program management and the importance of overcoming my fears and finding constructive solutions to challenging situations. I miss Stephen and Ed, but I know the program will go on without them. It's a good reminder to know what a gap not having them here makes in the program. In four months I won't be here any more and I want to make sure the satellite programs are up and running and that they won't rely on me in to continue. All in all a good day—free pizza, feeling a part of a team and knowing what the difference our program is going to make in Morrison. It doesn't get much better than this."

The satellite programs opened with great fanfare. At the open house to kick off the beginning of the programs one of the school principals said, "This is our community at its best. We appreciate the work of the VISTAs and of the marvelous partnerships they've created to make the literacy satellite programs a reality."

For the next four months the VISTAs were busy running tutor training programs, tracking down donations, working with the media and running the satellite programs. At the end of the year, Carlos was hired by YLC, Susan went back to school and Penny decided to do another year of service as an AmeriCorps Leader. In her final report to YLC she wrote "Serving as an AmeriCorps*VISTA member has given me a confidence in my abilities to coordinate community-based projects. It's given me the practical, hands-on experience that I would not have gained at an
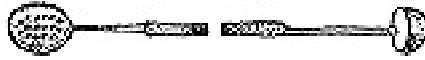
entry-level position directly out of college. I've been able to take charge of my own projects and to put the skills and knowledge I gained in school to use; I've proven to myself that I can transfer my knowledge into action."

The Morrison satellite program has been running now for seven years. The first three years the VISTAs served as program developer, during which time money was raised to hire a full-time staff member to administer the program and a part-time volunteer coordinator. The program has now served more than 2,000 students in the town of Morrison.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

❖How is this story different from Sandy Beach?

❖What role does a community play in ensuring sustainability?

❖What are some of the reasons the Yates program was successful?

The Right Ingredients: Wisdom from the Field

Purpose:
The Right Ingredients activity is based on lessons current and former volunteers have shared about their service experience. The wisdom activity illustrates the fundamental community development principles around the sustainability model—showing the important connections between VISTA, the workplan and the host organization.

Major Themes:

❖Importance of merging the one-year VISTA service commitment to the host community's long-range vision.

❖What happens to a community when you don't build a sustainable project—negative impact of short-sighted community programming.

❖Ensuring community buy-in and involvement with the workplan.

❖VISTAs using the time in service to find out about themselves and build a vision of what type of a community member/leader each would like to be.

VISTA

New Perspective

Know Yourself

Be Yourself

Listening

Pancake Breakfast Community Development

The Frustration Is the Education

The Happiness Factor

Build Your Soapbox

You Get What You Give

Sustaining Service

The Workplan

Community Ecology

The Two-Person Rule of Thumb

Direct vs. Indirect Service

Talents and Interests

VISTA Vision

Balance

Don't Reinvent the Wheel

Flexibility

Bringing People to the Table

You Come on the Shoulders of Others

Host Site & Community

Gate Keepers

Community Education and Empowerment

Progressive Responsibility

The Invisible VISTA

Partnerships

Thanks Yous

Trust

Finding the Kettle that Works for You :
Dot Activity

Purpose:

This activity illustrates the concept of paradigms and how they influence our problem-solving skills.

Major Themes:

❖Learning how to think outside of the box

❖Creative problem solving for challenging community problems

Below are nine dots in the shape of a square. Try to connect all nine dots using only four straight lines and without picking up your pen/pencil.

Setting the Table: Sustainability Workplan Exercise

Purpose:

This session applies what's been learned in earlier sessions to participants' workplans. The session provides participants with a way to outline and organize their project workplan.

Major Theme:
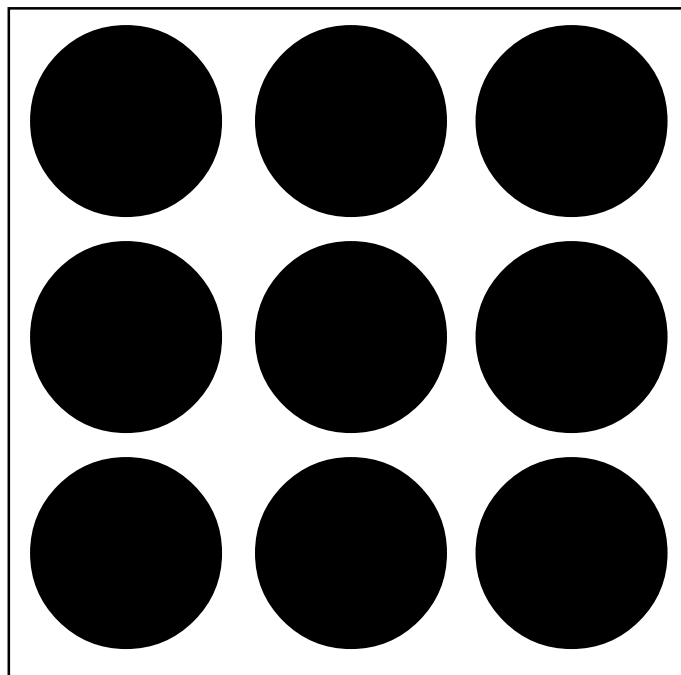
Developing a specific plan to ensure that the VISTA workplan is sustained once the VISTA grant is completed.

Using the template (page 73), please fill in the timeline starting with today's date and ending with the last month of your service year.

1. In the upper left-hand corner of the timeline write your sustainability statement. Your sustainability statement should say what program you plan to develop or sustain and how you will go about doing that. For example "The Springsteen Day Center will be a daytime shelter for the residents of Springsteen Township with medical, food, and legal facilities for participants. The Day Center will be managed by a full-time staff member, a corps of volunteers and clients." Make sure you outline what issue the program addresses, what services it provides and who will run the program when the VISTA grant is completed.

2. In the upper half of the template please write responses to the following questions about the Big Ideas:
   a. What are the goals of your project?
   b. What social justice ideas does your project address?
   c. What impact do you want your project to have on your host community?
   d. What will motivate people to become involved with your project?
   e. What do you want to learn from the experience?

3. Identifying your stakeholders. Who needs to be involved in the project for it to become sustainable? Potential stakeholders could be your supervisor, your organization's board, clients, specific community organizations, etc. In the bottom left corner of your timeline list each stakeholder group in a different color.

4. Breaking Down the Big Ideas into Project Components:
   Once you've got your big ideas then begin to organize them into projects.
   a. What are the projects within each big idea?
   b. What are the components of the project?
   c. Who would like to serve as the coordinator for each projects?
   d. What does a timetable look like for each projects?
   e. Could any of these projects work together to share resources?
   f. Deadlines for project components.
   g. How will you communicate your plan to others (clients, media, funders, etc.)?
   h. How will you evaluate your program?
   i. How will you address sustainability in your project?

Once you have discussed these components begin outlining your project on the timeline. Place project deadlines in one color and place the lead person for each component in another color and resource people in yet another color.

Things to keep in mind while writing up project timeline:
a. What resources are needed?
b. What resources could be shared?
c. What training might be helpful?
d. Are there potential partners who are not yet involved with the project?

Most important, what does your project look like at the end of your service year when you are no longer there?

Reporting Back
You will have one minute to report back on their workplan. In that minute make sure you observe the three report-back Cs: **Clear, Concise and Committed**. The one minute report should cover the following four topics:
1. Your sustainability statement;
2. A few of your Big Ideas;
3. Who your stakeholders are; and
4. What the project will look like when there is no longer a VISTA grant supporting the program.

Sample Sustainability Workplan

Sustainability Statement: *The Springsteen Day Center will be a daytime shelter for the residents of Springsteen township with medical, food, and legal facility for participants. The Day Center will be managed by a full time staff member and a corps of volunteers and clients.*

The Big Ideas
Community enlightenment on the issue of homelessness
Hope
Individualized care
Trust
One-stop-shop for client services
Social Justice
Dignity

Mobilize community resources
Quality Care
Client Empowerment
Safe Place
Compassion
Action
Collaboration

Stakeholders	January	March	May	July	September	November
VISTAs	Outline day center program. identify stakeholders	Organize community meeting to discuss Day Center	Fundraiser/ Service project for Day Center	Recruit program staff (paid and volunteer to run programs in Day Center	Recruit and train volunteers to run Day Center	Organize grand opening of Day Center
Supervisor	Inform and involve board	Identify and apply for long term funding to support the Day Center.	Develop program delivery strategy for the Day Center	Work with local nonprofit network to develop a referral service for the Day Center	Hire full time staff person to run the Day Center	Take your VISTAs out for a celebratory dinner
Clients	Review program outline	Participate in community meeting	Serve as project captains for service project	Help develop recruitment material.	Run client panel as part of training	Help organize and attend grand opening
Community members	Letter to the editor regarding increase in homelessness	Attend community meeting and volunteer for Day Center committee	Attend fundraiser/ service project with 2 friends	Identify and contact 3 local businesses for donations to the Center	Run a volunteer session on community resources	Attend grand opening and are awarded "Volunteer of the Year"

A7-73

Soup for the Soul: VISTA Vision

Purpose:
This session provides participants with time to reflect upon what it is they want to sustain, personally and project-wise, from their service experience.

Major Theme:
Write a personal vision statement by articulating what you want to accomplish during your service experience.

Please write down your vision statement for your service year. Some things to consider when writing your vision statement:

❖ What kind of a person do you want to be during and after your service?
❖ What legacy do you want to leave in your community?
❖ Do you want to sustain your commitment to service and if so how?
❖ What words/actions/people serve as a reminder for the kind of person you want to be?

Some examples of famous vision statements are:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.
~Margaret Mead

What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.
~Ralph Waldo Emerson

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Don't complain.
~Maya Angelou

We must be the change we wish to see in the world.
~Ghandi

The only thing you take with you when you're gone is what you leave behind.
~John Allston

He who has done his best for his own time has lived for all times.
~Johann von Schiller

Go to the People,
Live with them,
Learn from them,
Love them.
Start with what they know,
Build with what they have.

And with the best leaders
When the work is done
    the task accomplished
The people will say,
"We have done this ourselves."
~Lao Tse

I hope, believe, and dream that national service will remain throughout the life of America, not a series of promises, but a series of challenges, across all generations and all walks of life, to help us rebuild this beautiful but troubled land.
~ President Bill Clinton

Some examples of VISTA vision statements are:

Every night when I go to sleep I dream of a new world but in the morning I wake up to start to build it.
~Juan Carlos Gastón, Mayagüez Children's Library, Puerto Rico

United in service AmeriCorps we stand. Volunteering our lives where there is demand. We strive to leave the world better than it was before. Dedicated to "Getting things Done," We are AmeriCorps!
~Thor Midby, American Red Cross, Los Angeles, California

I will see it, become it, plan it, fix it, sustain it.
~Shirley Johnson, YorkCAN, York, Pennsylvania

It is human nature to want to help, but not everyone knows how. I want to dedicate my time and energy into being the example to those that are looking for some answers.
~Heather Luker, Utah Campus Compact, Salt Lake City, Utah

Workshop Evaluation

Date of Training _____

Name of Trainer _____

1. Please circle what type of project you are working on:

health   education   environment   public safety   unmet human needs.

2. How many months have you been a (VISTA, VISTA Leader, VISTA Supervisor, CNS Staff member)?

3. On a scale of 1-5 (1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree) please rate the following:

   a. The training content was appropriate to my project/individual needs.

       1   2   3   4   5

   b. The training gave me time to develop a sustainability strategy for my project.

       1   2   3   4   5

   c. The training gave me a better understanding about project sustainability.

       1   2   3   4   5

   d. The training gave me a better understanding about sustaining my service commitment past my service term.

       1   2   3   4   5

   e. I would be interested in additional sustainability trainings.

       1   2   3   4   5

4. What portion of the training was most helpful to you and why:

5. What portion of the training was least helpful to you and why?

6. Were your expectations for the training met?

7. Other comments about this training or suggestions for future trainings:

Thanks for your participation.

Local Information Sources

- Town Comprehensive Plan

- Mission Statements from Local Nonprofits

- The Community Reinvestment Officer at the Local Bank

- The Chamber of Commerce

- Census Information <www.census.gov> look at how the demographics in your community have changed.

- Talk with the journalist who covers your community

- Principal of the local school

- Zoning Board

- Tenant Associations

- Civic Clubs (Rotary, Elks, etc.)

- Find out if your area has ever done a community-wide survey

- Town historian

- Former members of your organizations' board

- Foundation staff

- VISTA alums

On Line Sustainability Resources

Sustainable Seattle: <www.scn.org/sustainable/susthome.html> Listing of policies, how Seattle has organized volunteers, 1998 Sustainable Community Indicators Report, and project descriptions (Neighborhood Network Team, Policy Group, and the Seattle Guide to Sustainable Living).

Center of Excellence for Sustainable Development: <www.sustainable.doe.gov/> Site has case studies, rural and urban specific sustainability information, funding opportunities and houses toolkits for the following topics: Land Use Planning, Green Buildings, Transportation Economics, Industry, Disaster Planning, Community Development

United States Environmental Protection Agency Funding Page: <http://134.67.55.16:7777/DC/OSECWeb.nsf/Grants?OpenView> Comprehensive listing of foundation and governmental funding opportunities for sustainable community development. Very helpful writing tutorial included in site.

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation: <www.wilder.org/pubs/pubcatlg.html> A series of community collaboration and community building, leadership development and marketing and fundraising publications available: A sampling of their titles: Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, Organizing for Social Change, Leadership, Management, and Planning: All the Way to the Bank: Smart Money Management for Tomorrow's Nonprofit, Consulting with Nonprofits: A Practitioner's Guide, Coping with Cutbacks: The Nonprofit Guide to Success When Times Are Tight, Marketing Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations Volume I: Develop the Plan, Wilder Nonprofit Field Guide to Conducting Successful Focus Groups, Wilder Nonprofit Field Guide to Getting Started on the Internet.

The Asset-Based Community Development Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University: <http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/abcd.html#AA> Guide to Mapping and Mobilizing the Economic Capacities of Local

Residents (1996), A Guide to Mapping Local Business Assets and Mobilizing Local Business Capacities (1996), A Guide to Mapping Consumer Expenditures and Mobilizing Consumer Expenditure Capacities (1996), A Guide to Capacity Inventories: Mobilizing the Community Skills of Local Residents (1997), A Guide to Evaluating Asset-Based Community Development: Lessons, Challenges, and Opportunities (1997), A Guide to Creating a Neighborhood Information Exchange: Building Communities by Connecting Local Skills, and Knowledge (1998), City-Sponsored Community Building: Savannah's Grants for Blocks Story (1998), Newspapers and Neighborhoods: Strategies for Achieving Responsible Coverage of Local Communities (1999).

Sustainable Communities Network: <www.sustainable.org> Site provides a listing of sustainable development funding sources, case studies, publications on the following topics: Smart Growth, Governing Sustainability, Civic Engagement, and Community Indicators.

Center for Livable Communities:<www.lgc.org/clc/> Hotline and Referral Help 1800-290-8202

Civic Practices Network: <www.cpn.org/index.html> Civic Practices Network (CPN) Center for Human Resources, Heller School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare/Brandeis University/ 60 Turner Street/Waltham, MA 02154/ Phone: (617) 736-4890. *Community Manuals* (i.e.: Community Building in Public Housing: The Ties that Bind People and their Communities, Planning Community-Wide Study Circle Programs: A Step-by-Step Guide, The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide: Violence in Our Communities, Building Communities From The Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets, The Community Visioning and Strategic Planning Handbook) Environmental Manuals, Networking Manuals, Family, Gender and Children's Manuals, Work and Empowerment Manuals, and Youth Education Manuals.

National Town Meeting for a Sustainable America:
Some interesting best practices profiles on youth, environmental and housing
programs.

Community Research network (Loka Institute): <www.loka.org/crn/index.htm>
Great linking page for a variety of social issues ranging from health to the
environment to agricultural issues. Also, the site houses a comprehensive
issue database and listing of funding sources.

Kellogg collection of community development resources: <www.unl.edu/
kellogg/index.html> A comprehensive database of community development
guidebooks, manuals, workshop materials, reports, books, and videos.
Useful for rural, urban, and suburban topics.

Stone Soup Sustainability:

A Supervisor's Guide
to Developing
Americorps*VISTA Workplans

Acknowledgments

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Corporation for National Service
Created in 1993, the Corporation for National Service oversees three national service initiatives—AmeriCorps, which includes AmeriCorps*VISTA, AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps, and hundreds of local and national nonprofits; Learn and Serve America, which provides models and assistance to help teachers integrate service and learning from kindergarten through college; and the National Senior Service Corps, which includes the Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

National Service Fellowship Program
The National Service Fellowship Program, launched by the Corporation for National Service in September 1997, involves a team of individual researchers who develop and promote models of quality service responsive to the needs of communities. The goal of the program is to strengthen national service through continuous learning, new models, strong networks, and professional growth.

What's in the Cupboard: Table of Contents

The Story of Stone Soup

A hungry peddler comes upon a town in famine. While looking for a place to have dinner the peddler meets up with the town blacksmith. When the peddler asks where he might partake in a meal, the blacksmith said "You'll find no food here, all the townspeople have hoarded their food and will not share with one another, especially not a stranger." To this the peddler declared that he had all the ingredients for a wonderful meal and that he would cook for the famine-ridden town. The peddler asked if he could borrow a kettle from the blacksmith and began to build a fire. When the blacksmith returned with the kettle they filled it with water and waited for it to boil. When the water began to boil the peddler reached deep into his coat pocket and pulled out a simple stone. He dropped the stone into the kettle of boiling water and leaned over the kettle and sniffed the air, licked his lips and declared that this was to be one of the best batches of stone soup he ever made. The townspeople began to gather around the kettle to see what this peddler was cooking up. Curiosity and hunger broke the silence of one townsman who said, "Stone soup is good, but it's even better with potatoes." Another villager shouted out, "What you really needed are quality carrots." And with that the villagers went to their respective homes, brought out the best food in their cabinets and dropped it in the pot. After all of the villagers had eaten the marvelous stone soup, they offered to purchase the stone. The peddler replied that he couldn't take money for the stone and left it for the townspeople. Years after the famine had passed, villagers could still be heard bragging about how wonderful their community's stone soup was.

~Old Russian Folk Tale

A8-4

Welcome

The story of **Stone Soup** is a great illustration of a community development project that is sustainable. The peddler creates a curiosity among residents to work together to make a meal that will end their hunger. When the trust level is high enough among the villagers they are willing to share the best that their cupboard has to offer with their neighbors. What did the peddler contribute to this process...a stone. Similarly, AmeriCorps*VISTAs (VISTA) come to your community filled with optimism and a motivation to serve—it's their touchstone for their service year. As the organization who has invited VISTAs to work on challenging community issues you, your organization and your community will serve as the host to the VISTAs. How do you make this a good experience for both you and the VISTA? A well thought out workplan, or a recipe for project sustainability, will help you develop a meaningful project as well as help you guide VISTAs to becoming lifelong peddlers for social change.

The purpose of this guide is to help VISTA project supervisors learn how to build sustainable AmeriCorps projects. It is designed to follow an AmeriCorps*VISTA project from its beginning stages all the way through its final grant year. The guide is based on information gathered from interviews with current VISTAs, VISTA alumni, VISTA supervisors, Corporation for National Service staff and national service training providers. The Guide is a collection of wisdom and lessons learned from thirty-five years of community development experience in communities across the United States.

The Guide examines the three key elements of a successful, sustainable VISTA project: the host site, the project workplan and the VISTAs. The Guide uses the workplan to bridge the needs of the host site and community to the talents and interest of the VISTAs and provides supervisors with checklists, timelines and sample project material to help create, implement and sustain a VISTA project.

Before starting out, it's important to point out two principles the Guide supports. The first is that the Guide looks at sustainability both in terms of how to build a sustainable VISTA project (projects that last long after the VISTA grant is completed) and also how to develop sustainable VISTA members (people who have a life long commitment to service).

The other key philosophy the guide supports is that sustainability for a VISTA project is best defined by its host community. The guide outlines important programming questions to ask project stakeholders, illustrates how sustainability has been built in other projects and builds skills for VISTAs and VISTA supervisors to integrate sustainability into their workplans. Ultimately what a sustainable project looks like is based upon the host community's needs and desires.

Throughout the guide you'll see "resource reading" recommendations. All of the publications mentioned in the guide are available through National Service Resource Center (NSCR) administered by ETR Associates.

ETR Associates
P.O. Box 1830
Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830
Phone: 800-860-2684
Fax: 831-430-9471
<www.etr.org/NSRC>

The Guide is part of the **Stone Soup Sustainability Series** developed for the AmeriCorps*VISTA community. The two other pieces in the series are: a sustainability training manual, **Stone Soup: How to Sustain the AmeriCorps*VISTA Experience** and **Making Soup from a Stone: A Sustainability Workbook for AmeriCorps*VISTA Members.** The training manual is a compilation of activities designed to help the VISTA host community and organization increase their awareness of sustainability. The manual can be found at <www.nationalservice.org/jobs/fellowships/1999-00.html>, all of the training suggestions listed in the guide are located in the training manual. The workbook helps VISTAs collect and organize important project and communicy information so that it can be passed on to successors. The workbook can also be found at <www.nationalservice.org/jobs/fellowships/1999-00.html>.

I hope you find this Guide useful and that it helps you create sustainable community development projects. Good luck!

~Amy Bonn, National Service Fellow. VISTA Alum.

A Quick Overview of Sustainability and AmeriCorps*VISTA Projects

Sustainability for an AmeriCorps*VISTA project should be defined by the host organization and the state office. Sustainability looks different in every community—different needs and different resources depending on the issue the host site addresses. It's important for VISTA host sites and state offices to discuss sustainability early in the application process so there is a shared vision of what the project will look like when the AmeriCorps*VISTA grant is completed. "Always keep the end in mind" is the advice that Corporation staff member and VISTA alum John Vivian gives to all prospective VISTA project applicants. By emphasizing that a VISTA grant is a temporary resource and that the purpose of the VISTA's work is to mobilize community and host organization resources helps to ensure sustainability.

Suggested Host Site and CNS State Office Sustainability Discussion Topics

1. Describe the network your AmeriCorps*VISTA project will develop.
2. What are the objectives of the project?
3. What do you want the project to look like in three years without VISTA resources?
4. What are some local resources (nonprofit, government agencies, schools) that might be able to help establish a network to support this project?
5. What funding sources might support such a project?
6. How would the project's success and sustainability be evaluated?
7. What training is available to help the VISTAs develop the project?
8. What is the host organization's board's commitment to the project?

Sustainability is being able to maintain your presence and some of your activities after a VISTA grant is completed. I don't think it necessarily means that all of the activities that all of the VISTAs work on a project have to be kept in place or continued because in a lot of cases that may not be a good idea or the community may not buy in to it. To me there are basically three elements that have to be happening to make part of the project sustainable: funding has to be coming in, the project needs a strong volunteer base, and the program needs a strong presence in the community. This all stems from marketability and being able to explain and show to everybody what you are doing so everyone accepts you as a partner.
~Craig Warner, Nevada State Director

What Does a Sustainable AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Look Like?

Sustainability is different for every project. Each project has to develop its own set of criteria for what sustainability means. The five most typical ways VISTA projects are sustained are:

1. A funding source is found to support the project and the host organization hires staff (often a VISTA) to continue the work.

2. The problem the project was developed to address is eradicated.

3. The project is spun off to another organization.

4. The project becomes a community collaborative with several partners contributing funding and resources.

5. The project is folded into daily operations for the host organization and program responsibilities are taken over by a staff member.

Think about these five strategies and consider which one is most realistic for your project. The key questions to address are: What partnerships need to be formed early on in the process for sustainability to occur? and What resources need to be in place for the project to last beyond the VISTA grant?

Training Suggestion

"Two Tales of Sustainability" in **Stone Soup Training Module: Sustaining the AmeriCorps*VISTA Experience**, pages 16-27 in the Facilitator's Guide. In this activity VISTAs, VISTA supervisors and community members learn about their roles in creating a sustainable project.
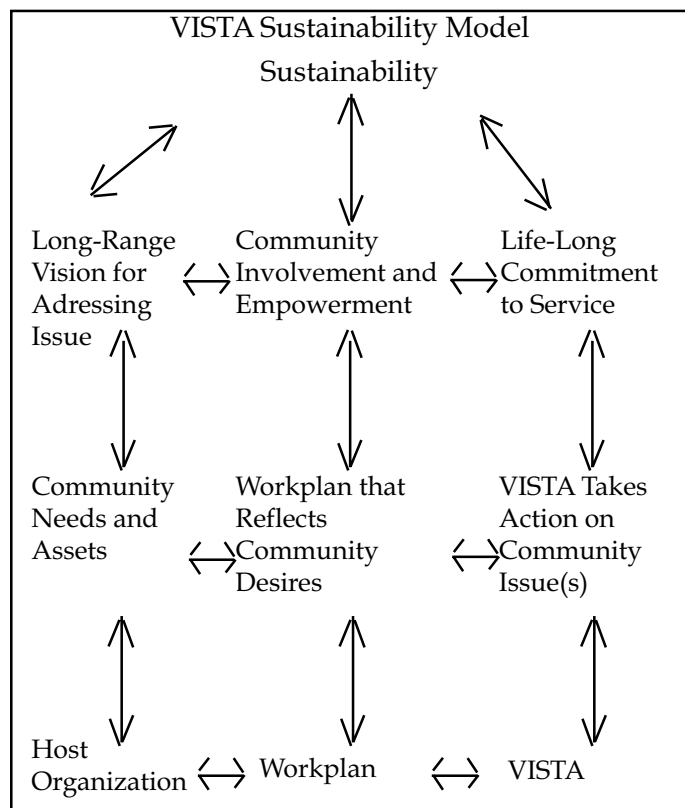
Resource Reading

The Resource Connection Volume 4, Number 2 is about sustainability. Articles address issues such as program profiles, public/ private partnerships and working with the media. The newsletter can be accessed on line at:<www.etr.org/nsrc/ rcv4n2/rcv4n2toc.htm>

Talking about Sustainability

While there is no magic formula that can be applied to a project to ensure its sustainability, the following model shows the relationship between the three core elements that work together to build sustainability; the host site and community; the workplan; and the VISTA. Each element depend on and builds off of the others' work to develop a project that reflects community needs and desires and has a network to sustain the work once the VISTA grant is completed. Additionally, the model illustrates how the service experience can foster a lifelong commitment to service for the VISTA.

Looking at the model from the bottom up, the community and host site are responsible for assessing the community's needs and assets and developing a workplan that reflects these findings. The workplan serves as the bridge between the work of the host site and the VISTA. The workplan is the continuum that provides continuity between the different grant years as well as incorporating the unique talents and expectations of the different VISTAs who will serve in the program. The VISTA is charged with

VISTA Sustainability Model

Sustainability

Long-Range Vision for Adressing Issue ⟷ Community Involvement and Empowerment ⟷ Life-Long Commitment to Service

Community Needs and Assets ⟷ Workplan that Reflects Community Desires ⟷ VISTA Takes Action on Community Issue(s)

Host Organization ⟷ Workplan ⟷ VISTA

building the capacity of the host organization as well as establishing a network within the community to make the workplan come to fruition.

The top tier of the model shows the host organization and community with a long-range vision of how to address the issue once the VISTAs grant is completed. The workplan, particularly during the final year , focuses on securing resources to support the program in these efforts. Finally, if sustainability is to occur for the VISTAs who serve on the project, time, training and thought must be given to develop a connection between the VISTA service experience and that person's post-service life. A sustainable VISTA member is an alum who continues to participate in service opportunities after the service year.

Sustainability for both a project and a member is contingent on the three core elements working together. Making sure element complement the other and reflects the other elements' desires and includes their ideas is key to making sustainability happen. With these connections in mind, you can start drafting the goals and objectives for the VISTA workplan.

It Takes a Village to Make Stone Soup:

Serving as an AmeriCorps Host Organization and Community

Once the decision to apply for a VISTA grant has been made, it's important to think about a couple of questions as you develop your application:

1. What has been done on this issue before?
2. Have any community needs/asset assessments been conducted on this topic?
3. What organizations need to have buy-in for the project to be sustained?

Many VISTA host sites have found it helpful to form a planning group to assist with the application process. The role of the planning group is to review the VISTA application, help supply the host organization with statistics on the project topic and aid in building a community network to support the VISTA's work.

Here is a list of potential planning group members:
- ❖ Board members of the host organization
- ❖ Clients
- ❖ Civic groups (Elk's Club, Grange, Kiwanis, PTA, etc.)
- ❖ Former VISTA sponsor or VISTA alum
- ❖ Other nonprofit/government agencies working on similar issues
- ❖ Representative from media
- ❖ Chamber of Commerce representative
- ❖ Representative from local government
- ❖ Representative from a local foundation
- ❖ A staff member from the county planning office
- ❖ Members of other National Service programs (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, RSVP, NCCC)

The earlier a community network is developed and informed about the mission of a VISTA project, the greater the chances for sustainability.

Make sure supervisors and staff knows what the impact of a VISTA grant is going to be on the organization and how to use VISTAs as a resource. Let people know what the expectations are for the VISTA's work. When you are setting up the grant it's important to let people know about the resource (VISTAs). In the beginning there is some trial and error of learning how to use a resource that isn't an employee. To the employees, VISTAs could have be threatening…to everyone it was a little threatening because the VISTAs come in and they are so energetic and they only have one program to focus on where other staff members have multiple tasks to do. It was an uphill climb getting staff to use VISTAs to the best advantage and make sure they understood the VISTAs were not replacing staff.
~Jeanne Bock, VISTA Supervisor, Panhandle Health, Idaho

Advisory Boards and Mentors

Many state offices require the formation of an advisory board for a VISTA project. Advisory boards have worked with great success in some projects and have not been helpful to others. When successful, advisory boards have followed the VISTA project through the entire grant tenure and have served as a continuum for the project. The advisory board members typically meet four times a year to review the progress of the project and to ensure that project information is passed from grant year to grant year. Oftentimes the host site's board or a subset of that board serves as the VISTA advisory board. Whether or not to establish an advisory board is a discussion the site supervisor should have with the state office.

If an advisory board is not established consider a mentor for the VISTA. Mentors are community members willing to orient a VISTA to the community and provide project support throughout the service year. Many mentor pairs have been made based upon the career interests of the particular VISTA. For example, a VISTA who hopes to become a teacher after their service experience is paired with a local teacher, a VISTA interested in politics is paired with someone in the mayor's offices, etc. Mentors can provide valuable personal support to the VISTA during the challenging first few months of service as well as add another layer of sustainability for to the project.

Many of these suggestions are geared toward VISTAs who may be national recruits and/or whose VISTA experience may be their first job. If you have recruited senior members, people who have several years of work experience or long-time community residents, consider pairing them with an individual who is acquainted with parts of the community unfamiliar to the senior. For example, a senior VISTA working on a youth literacy project could be paired with a member

General Information to Share When Recruiting Advisory Boards and Mentors

Goal: The purpose of the advisory board/mentors is to help ensure the sustainability of our VISTA project by assisting with project development and assessment.

Role: The advisory board/ mentor serves a support system for the VISTA both personally and professionally. The advisory board/mentors serve as local advocates for the work of the VISTAs by assisting with a community orientation for the VISTAs and identifying helpful community resources for their project. The advisory board/mentors also help with transitioning project material and responsibilities from one VISTA grant year to another.

Responsibilities: Advisory board members/mentors are asked to meet with the VISTAs on a quarterly basis to review the progress of the project and to assess if there are resources that are needed for the project. Advisory board members/ mentors are also asked to assist VISTAs with post-service career development plans.

of the student council who could help the VISTA teen lingo as well as to orient the VISTA to the interworkings of the school system from the youth perspective. The key to a successful pairing is to find areas where the VISTA needs help meeting people and identifying resources and then finding a community member who has this background.

Creating Community and Organizational Buy-In

A VISTA grant is an unusual award. Human capital instead of a financial grant makes for an interesting resource. Many supervisors mention the importance of informing and involving the staff from the beginning of the application process. Below are key points that supervisors cited as key issues for the staff to know about before the VISTA arrives.

1. VISTAs are a temporary resource. Make sure employees know the length of the grant term.
2. VISTAs aren't coming to replace staff.
3. VISTAs have a very specific workplan that may be much more focused on a particular project than staff members who have responsibilities to multiple projects.
4. VISTAs have responsibilities and obligations to AmeriCorps that should be considered as important as their site work.

Community buy-in is equally as important to a VISTA's success. There's nothing more daunting to a VISTA as hearing, "VISTA? What's a VISTA?" during their first weeks of service. Working with the staff, the board and key community members to prepare for the VISTA's arrival can make an enormous difference in the comfort level and amount of cooperation a VISTA experiences during the service year.

Resource Reading

Individualized Mentoring Model: A Recipe for Success
by McCarthy, Nyla and Lynn Knox
Available through the National Service Resource Library: ETR Associates Phone: 800-860-2684
<www.etr.org/NSRC>

Training Suggestion

"Finding a Kettle That Works for You: Paradigms and Your Community Development Outlook" in **Stone Soup Training Module: Sustaining the AmeriCorps*VISTA Experience**, pages 37-40 in the Facilitator's Guide. This activity helps VISTAs and VISTA supervisors find creative solutions to community challenges.

The Recipe for Sustainability: Writing the Workplan

With the staff, board and key community members on board you can now get down to writing the workplan for the VISTA project. It's helpful to keep the following three questions in mind as you develop the workplan:

1. What specific project am I trying to sustain and what will it look like once the VISTAs are gone?
2. Who are the stakeholders for the project?
3. What resources does our organization and community have and need to make this project sustainable?

If you have an advisory board in place, or if you are writing up the workplan with staff, it's helpful to review these questions with them and to make sure that you in agreement about the objectives of the project.

> **Identifying Appropriate Projects for VISTAs**
> It's beneficial to spend time thinking about where VISTAs might be most effective within your organization. Because VISTAs are short-term employees who likely have a different employment history than your staff their role and projects may be very different from your traditional employee. Three areas where VISTAs tend to excel are mobilizing resources, volunteer development and communications. The chart below lists some of the roles where VISTAs have been able to merge their talents and experience with the host organizations needs.

Suggestions for Writing a Workplan
from Current and Former VISTA Supervisors

❖ VISTAs are most helpful and productive when their projects build off of successful programs that your organization already has in place.
❖ Balance the short-term and long-term projects you lay out for the VISTAs. It's difficult for VISTAs to stay motivated when the majority of their work is focused on one event/project that is in the distant future.
❖ Always think of the VISTA's work as "What if the VISTAs weren't here tomorrow. How would we staff and support this project?" Reminding yourself that this is a temporary resource is essential to the success of the project.
❖ Pair your VISTAs with a staff member who knows the project and what work they are doing. This ensures that the organization knows the details of the project (who the contact people are, where the files are, what the challenges are, etc.).
❖ Keep the workplan flexible. Issues change, funding opportunities change, staffing changes, talents that your VISTA brings to your projects can be different; be open to new ideas and make sure your workplan reflects this flexibility because you can always go back and revise the workplan with your state office staff.
On the next page is a listing of examples of successful VISTA workplan activities.

Examples of VISTA Project Activities

Mobilize Resources

1. Identify grant sources and write proposals

2. Conduct community needs/asset assessments

3. Organize fundraisers

4. Develop community partnerships (corporate sponsorship, adopt-a-program)

5. Establish collaborations with other organizations who are working on similar issue(s)

6. Create a donations program

Volunteer Development

1. Develop a volunteer program

2. Recruit volunteers

3. Establish a volunteer training program

4. Create and coordinate volunteer committees to work on issues such as fundraising and the media

5. Organize community service projects

6. Establish a recognition program for volunteers

Communication

1. Write a newsletter

2. Develop organizational material (public service announcements, brochures, videos, annual reports)

3. Develop a web page

4. Attend and speak at community events. Develop a speaker's bureau for the host organization.

5. Work with the local media to educate the community about the host organization's work.

6. Develop material for an annual membership drive.

Stages of the Workplan

When developing the workplan it's helpful to look at the grant in three stages: building the foundation for the program, implementing the program and sustaining the program. The next section uses a three-year VISTA grant to outline what some typical VISTA activities are in each of the three stages.

Year One: The Foundation Stage

Year one activities focus on information gathering, relationship building and designing and refining program plans. During the foundation stage the workplan should address building community literacy, which can be done by the VISTA attending a variety of community events; learning community and organizational history; finding strategies on how to merge the workplan agenda with other local agencies' work; involving community stakeholders, building collaborations, involving the clients in the program planning stages and identifying helpful resource and technical assistance providers. Also during the first year emphasize working with the local media to involve and inform the community. During the first year the VISTAs should spend time establishing project infrastructure. This means the VISTAs work with the staff to develop an evaluation of the project as well as set up a record-keeping system for the project. Finally, identify and pursue resources (both staffing/volunteer and financial).

Year Two: The Implementation Stage

Year two activities center around running the project and finding resources to support it. Project maintenance activities could include mass recruiting efforts, evaluation and modification of the program accorading to evaluation, or finding long-term funding for the project. During the implementation stage it's also important to develop a plan for what

We've seen a lot of projects terminated because the organization says, "We need help, we need help" only they can't articulate in tangible terms what that help would translate into when a human being shows up and wants to do it. They can't do that. Secondly , they are unable to explain what a difference it will make. As a result of our being here what may change? If the answer is it's going to be the same as when you left, you are going to have minimal impact.

~Mal Coles, Massachusetts State Office Director, VISTA alum

will happen when the VISTAs are no longer there. Determining a transition strategy and outlining sustainability activities for the third year is an important activity for this stage.

Year Three: The Sustaining Stage
While all three years activities should address sustainability, during the final year of the grant, in this case year three, activities should focus on securing staff, volunteer and partnership support as well as financial resources to continue the project. During the third year it's also important to assess the impact of the project in the community by developing reports that document the number of people the project has reached, amount of money raised, number of volunteer hours contributed, etc. Once this is completed a community celebration and recognition event honoring the work should be arranged to let the community know what the post-VISTA project will look like and what role residents can play in making a successful transition.

VISTA Assignment	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Community outreach	Conduct community needs/ asset assessment. Hold town meetings to identify community a. Work with media to inform the community about the issue the project will address. Develop long-range plan for issue based on findings from the town meetings and assessments.	Start program(s) identified during year one. Develop evaluation strategy for the project and conduct a mid-year review of project effectiveness and adjust project accordingly.	Evaluate program. Develop project m anagement guide for the program. Train volunteers/staff who will take over program after the grant.
Fundraiser	Develop long range funding plan for project. Identify potential local, regional and national funders and grants for the project. Create fundraising packet material for the project.	Organize a first annual fundraiser for the program. Establish a partnership program to encourage cross-sector participation and donations. Create a database of funders. Apply for grants identified in year one.	Continue grant writing. Organize second annual fundraising event. Write fundraising program guide for the organization. Identify sponsors for program. Create recognition program for funders.
Volunteer Coordinator	Work with staff to identify where volunteers are needed and create a long-range plan for volunteer involvement. Develop volunteer recruitment material. Create training curriculum for volunteers. Recruit volunteers. Pilot volunteer training.	Integrate volunteers into project(s). Organize a volunteer fair. Conduct a series of volunteer trainings. Organize a recognition event for volunteers. Establish volunteer committees to address issues such as publicity and fundraising. Create volunteer database.	Continue recruitment, training, volunteer fair and recognition event as described in year two. Write a volunteer management guide for the project. Train lead volunteer/staff member to take over project.

Developing Goals and Objectives for the Workplan

The keys to a successful workplan are clear goals and objectives that break down the goals into manageable projects. Effective workplans usually have five to ten goals, with four to six supporting objectives for each goal. It's helpful to have the objectives chronologically. If you have more than one VISTA at your site it's useful to identify by assignment title which member(s) will be addressing the objective.

A well-balanced workplan has goals that address funding, manpower, communication, evaluation and member development (skill building and post-service options). The following tried and true objectives address typical VISTA project goals:

❖ **Partnerships:** During the first quarter the VISTA will meet with each school principal in the district and attend at least four civic club meetings.

❖ **Skill building:** In the first quarter VISTAs will work with staff to identify what type of training is needed (computer, public speaking, fundraising, grant writing) to increase the capability of the VISTA to complete the workplan.

❖ **Evaluation:** During the first quarter the VISTAs will work the staff to develop an evaluation system for the project.

❖ **Resource mobilization:** During the second quarter VISTAs will identify and apply for three local funding sources and two national grants to support the program.

❖ **Communication:** During the third quarter, VISTAs will create a marketing tool kit to be used for fundraising efforts as well as for recruiting volunteers.

❖ **Post- Service:** During the third quarter VISTAs will meet with staff to discuss a post-service plan. Time will be allotted during this quarter for VISTAs to meet with career counselors and/or people in their field of interest.

❖ **Transitioning between grant years and VISTAs:** During the fourth quarter the VISTAs will develop a program guide that outlines how the program is managed, lists program contact people and identifies current and future funding sources.

Section III: AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Work Plan – Problem 1

AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Goals and Objectives	Planned Period of Work	Summary of Accomplished Objectives (Please provide *quantifiable* information.)
Goal 1: Support the economic independence of residents.		
Objective 1: Work with residents to update the needs assessment conducted during year two of this project.	1st quarter	
Objective 2: Create economic independence committees at each site.	1st quarter	
Objective 3: Facilitate on-site activities such as job clubs, workshops and a mentoring/apprenticeship program.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 4: Facilitate the development of classes, programs and support groups that address related barriers towards reaching family self-sufficiency.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 5: Empower residents and staff to continue working toward family self-sufficiency after the conclusion of this project.	2nd–4th quarter	
Goal 2: Increase the social and academic development among at-risk youth.		
Objective 1: Recruit adult advisors to work with youth councils.	1st quarter	
Objective 2: Organize community service opportunities for youth.	2nd–4th quarter.	
Objective 3: Develop after school, weekend, evening and summer activities for youth that focus on both academic and social development and involve parents.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 4: Coordinate youth leadership training and development.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 5: Facilitate youth council planning to sustain youth and adult involvement.	1st–4th quarter	
Goal 3: Empower Resident Associations (RAs) to address problems in their communities.		
Objective 1: Assist with the creation of RAs at properties where they do not currently exist.	1sst quarter	
Objective 2: Train RA members on leadership and organization.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 3: Assist RAs in developing priorities for their communities and implementing the appropriate programs.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 4: Facilitate RAs involvement in the activities outlined in Goals 1 and 2.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 5: Train RAs to raise funds and develop resources needed to achieve their goals.	2nd–4th quarter	

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Section III: AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Work Plan – Problem 2

AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Goals and Objectives	Planned Period of Work	Summary of Accomplished Objectives (Please provide *quantifiable* information.)
Goal 1: Youth Resource Development.		
Objective 1: Work with VISTAs to assess needs of youth in each community.	1st quarter	
Objective 2: Research summer camp opportunities for youth at all sites.	1st quarter	
Objective 3: Develop a resource directory of youth development programs.	2nd quarter	
Objective 4: Contact existing youth agencies and create collaborations.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 5: Assist VISTAs in the start-up of on-site youth activities	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 6: Write grants and organize fundraising for youth programs.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 7: Empower residents and staff to continue youth programs and agency contacts after the conclusion of this project.	2nd–4th quarter	
Goal 2: Promote Youth Leadership.		
Objective 1: Create a *how to form a youth leadership council* handbook.	2nd quarter	
Objective 2: Meet with potential youth leaders at each site to determine goals of creating a youth council.	2nd–3rd quarter	
Objective 3: Recruit adult advisors to work with youth councils.	2nd–3rd quarter	
Objective 4: Coordinate youth leadership training and development.	3rd–4th quarter	
Objective 5: Facilitate youth council planning to sustain youth and adult involvement.	2nd–4th quarter	
Goal 3: Coordinate Volunteers for Youth Programs.		
Objective 1: Contact and create a list of volunteers for RCHC's onsite youth programs from schools, volunteer organizations, and community groups.	1st quarter	
Objective 2: Coordinate volunteer recruitment, training, and ongoing support.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 3: Hold a volunteer recognition event twice a year.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 4: Put together a volunteer handbook	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 5: Plan for RCHC staff to continue volunteer program after the conclusion of the project.	2nd–4th quarter	

Section III: AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Work Plan – Problem 3

AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Goals and Objectives	Planned Period of Work	Summary of Accomplished Objectives (Please provide *quantifiable* information.)
Goal 1: Create collaborations with job training and placement agencies to increase access to job opportunities.		
Objective 1: Meet with residents, VISTAs and RCHC staff to identify needs.	1st quarter	
Objective 2: Identify and contact local agencies in Sacramento, Yuba and San Joaquin counties involved in job training and placement.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 3: Develop a formal collaboration with job training and placement organizations to provide services to residents as appropriate.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 4: Work with site-based VISTAs to implement programs on-site.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 5: Develop a manual of job training and placement organizations in Sacramento, Yuba and San Joaquin counties.	2nd–4th quarter	
Goal 2: Identify and collaborate with agencies that can assist with small business development.		
Objective 1: Meet with VISTAs and RCHC staff to identify residents interested in small business development.	1st quarter	
Objective 2: Identify and contact local agencies in Sacramento, Yuba and San Joaquin counties that provide assistance to small business, train entrepreneurs, and/or provide micro enterprise loans.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 3: Develop a formal collaboration with economic development organizations that provide services to residents interested in staring small businesses.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective4: Work with site-based VISTAs to implement programs on-site.	2nd–4th quarter	
Goal 3: Raise funds, generate resources for economic development projects at RCHC housing.		
Objective 1: Work with staff to identify programmatic and funding needs.	1st quarter	
Objective 2: Research potential funding sources.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 3: Write at least four grant proposals.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 4: Research new program areas related to economic development.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 5: Develop a volunteer pool of professionals to serve as mentors for residents.	1st-4th quarter	

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Section III: AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Work Plan – Problem 4

AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Goals and Objectives	Planned Period of Work	Summary of Accomplished Objectives (Please provide *quantifiable* information.)
Goal 1: Help the newly formed resident association (for renters and homeowners) develop a leadership role in the community.		
Objective 1: Assist in updating the inventory of community leadership	1st quarter	
Objective 2: Strengthen the Residents Council created last year by helping members to access training and technical assistance	1st–4th quarter-	
Objective 3: Help the newly formed Residents Council raise funds and access other resources needed to meet their goals.	1st–4th quarter	
Goal 2: Facilitate the Consolidation of HOAs.		
Objective 1: Continue to facilitate stakeholders meeting of the HOA membership, residents and other support groups.	1st–4th quarter	
Objective 2: Work with HOAs in the development of a consolidated HOA.	1st–4th quarter	
Objective 3: Help the consolidated HOA raise funds and access other resources needed to meet their goals.	1st–4th quarter	
Goal 3: Mobilize service providers and programs to help FV residents transition off welfare assistance.		
Objective 1: Recruit welfare-to-work training services to locate in FV.	1st–4th quarter	
Objective 2: Assist with the development of youth programs at FV.	1st–4th quarter	
Objective 3: Support the development of daycare providers in FV.	1st–4th quarter	

Section III: AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Work Plan – Problem 5

AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Goals and Objectives	Planned Period of Work	Summary of Accomplished Objectives (Please provide *quantifiable* information.)
Goal 1: Facilitate the creation of neighborhood associations for self-help housing participants and support their efforts with technical assistance.		
Objective 1: Conduct an assessment of community issues and needs in existing self-help subdivisions.	1st quarter	
Objective 2: Train neighborhood leaders to increase the families' participation in the associations.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 3: Assist with the development of an organizational structure.	2nd–3rd quarter	
Objective 4: Develop linkages with local organizations.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 5: Act as a resource to neighborhood leaders.	2nd–4th quarter	
Goal 2: Implement the homeowners' education program that was developed last year.		
Objective 1: Identify and procure any additional resources needed to complete the homeowner education program.	1st quarter	
Objective 2: Expand current educational program to include information and resources.	1st–2nd quarter	
Objective 3: Coordinate the implementation of this training program for new homeowners.	2nd–4th quarter	
Objective 4: Coordinate with neighborhood associations to organize homeowner training.	3rd quarter	
Objective 5: Develop a volunteer pool that assist with this project.	1st–4th quarter	

Section III: AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Work Plan – VISTA Leader

AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Goals and Objectives	Planned Period of Work	Summary of Accomplished Objectives (Please provide *quantifiable* information.)
Goal 1: Assist with the coordination of meetings and training activities for VISTA Members.		
Objective 1: Develop a calendar of training and activities for VISTA Members.	1st quarter	
Objective 2: Coodinate schedules of the VISTA Members, VISTA Supervisor and Site Coordinators.	1st–4th quarter	
Objective 3: Coordinate training and activities with other local agencies that have VISTA Members.	1st–4th quarter	
Objective 4: Prepare agendas and travel plans for meetings and training.	1st–4th quarter	
Objective 5: Coordinate activities, meetings and training sessions	1st–4th quarter	
Goal 2: Facilitate internal and external communications related to the VISTA project.		
Objective 1: Serve as a liaison to the VISTA Advisory Committee overseeing the VISTA project for RCHC.	1st–4th quarter	
Objective 2: Coordinate public relations efforts for the VISTA project directed at the media and local officials.	1st–4th quarter	
Objective 3: Assist with reporting requirements for the VISTA project.	1st–4th quarter	
Goal 3: Support the VISTA members and their work by conducting research, acting as ombudsperson and conducting site visits.		
Objective 1: Act as ombudsperson and conduct site visits as needed.	1st–4th quarter	
Objective 2: Conduct research to support the activities of the VISTA Members.	1st–4th quarter	
Goal 4: Help ensure the sustainability of the VISTA project after the program has ended.		
Objective 1: Prepare a report detailing the successes and failures of the VISTA project to date and making suggestions for the future.	1st–2nd quarter	
Objective 2: Help develop a sustainability action plan.	1st–4th quarter	
Objective 3: Assist with the final program evaluation.	3rd–4th quarter	

Evaluating the Impact of the Workplan

The more specific the workplan objectives are, the easier it will be to communicate the goals of the project to others as well as evaluate the impact of the program. Below is an activity that David Gurr from the Corporation for National Service developed to help programs he works with write clear, specific, easy to evaluate goals and objectives.

Means-Ends Test

The Means-Ends test is a easy method for developing a plan of action. The Means-Ends test is one of a number of Management By Objectives (MBO) techniques for identifying and revolving problems. An action plan must include sufficient detail to periodically measuring progress in project implementation.

The process begins by first determining the "ends" to be achieved. A specific problem statement is made. The question "why" is a problem is asked. Each answer to the question "why" is, in turn, asked "why", until the answer becomes clear. Of course, the stated solution must be within the organization's capacity to address.

Once an realistic solution has been developed, it needs to be converted into one or more statements of objectives. An objective statement must meet three criteria:

       1. A change in a condition or behavior,

       2. It is quantifiable, and

       3. There is a timeline for achievement.

Most objectives cannot be achieved in one year. Therefore, intermediate or short-term objectives

> *The workplan is only as useful as the individual who completes it sees it as a tool. How seriously supervisors think through a project to the end is important...if that doesn't happen the workplan is just another piece of paper.*
>
> ~Brenda Takeshore, VISTA Supervisor, Bureau of Land Management, Alaska

Training Suggestion

"Setting the Table: Sustainability Workplan Exercise" in **Stone Soup Training Module: Sustaining the A m e r i C o r p s * V I S T A Experience**, Facilitor's Guide pages 41-46. During this activity participants develop a long-range sustainability plan for their project.

Resource Material

Program Director's Handbook by the Corporation for National Service available at <http://www.etr.org/nsrc/online_docs.html>

or milestones need to be developed for each objective which can be achieved in a year or even in a quarter.

Each objective statement serves as the starting point for defining the activities or "means" necessary for achieving them. The means for accomplishing objectives are specified by asking the question "how" for each stated objective. The question "how" is asked of each subsequent answer to each question until all of the activities necessary to achieve each objective is given. In addition, other resources, and training and technical assistance need to be stated.

The identified objectives and activities can then be put in a work plan format along with the dates for accomplishing each activity. Finally, a budget can be drawn up that supports each activity.

Periodic evaluations must be conducted to determine 1) if the activities are being implemented and 2) if they are accomplishing each objective. The Project Progress Report form is completed quarterly by AmeriCorps*VISTA project sponsors to measure actual accomplishments. Required changes need to be made to work plan objectives and activities that reflect evaluation findings. In the case of an AmeriCorps*VISTA project sponsor, these modifications are submitted to the CNS State Program Office for approval.

Writing the Assignment Description

After the workplan is complete you can create assignment descriptions for each VISTAs you'll have on site. The assignment description should be a summary of the goals and objectives from the workplan. You may be using the assignment description to recruit VISTAs, so it will likely be fairly general. Here are a couple of tips of what to include when writing your descriptions.

- The basics: mission of the host organization, location of the host organization, contact information of the host organization.
- Description of the VISTA program
- Description of the project that the VISTA will be working on. Be sure to include short-term and long-term projects.
- Outline of skills needed to accomplish the project as well as what skills will be built through participating in the VISTA project.
- Include a statement the project is open to the interests, talents and experiences that the VISTA will bring to the project.
- Outline of the training, relocation and mentoring support the project will provide to the VISTA. Be sure to include the pre-service orientation and early service training offered by your cluster..

The National Service Resource Library has a series of online documents including assignment descriptions, mission statements, policies and press releases. This material can be accessed through their website at <http://www.etr.org/nsrc/forms/index.html>

The Peddler: The VISTA and their Service Year

The VISTA Service Year

The VISTA service year can be thought of in much the same way as the workplan—a sort of bell curve of activity. During the first few months a VISTA needs time to acclimate to the community. A helpful way of approaching the service year is to break it down into four stages: orientation; months one-three, acclimation; months three-nine, production and implementation; and the sustaining stage; months nine-twelve.

A solid orientation program is the cornerstone of a successful VISTA project. Orientations gives VISTAs the resources and contacts needed to address the workplan as well as provide an opportunity for the host organization to learn what talents and experience the VISTA brings to the host site. During months three through nine VISTAs are in their production and implementation stage, where the bulk of the work is accomplished. The focus of months nine through twelve should be on documenting and sustaining the work completed during the prior nine months. The following series of suggestions will help supervisors address the needs of VISTAs during each stage of the service year.

> *On his VISTA supervisor Carla Hanson:*
> *Carla gave us assignment titles and told us generally what we could work on but the specifics of each of our assignments was yet to be discovered. She gave suggestions and ideas, as well as resources, and expected us to fill in the blanks. She was great at motivation but really gave us a lot of room (EIGHT SQUARE MILES) to figure it out for ourselves. I began to meet people through my project that could help me with certain aspects of my assignment. The whole concept of VISTA to me at this point was empowerment of the people and I was experiencing this first hand. I had to discover the resources and I had to seek out help to accomplish goals and set new ones. I had to look busy when I wasn't and try to figure out what else I could be doing to do my job.*
> ~Chris Krupa.
> Special education teacher, New York. VISTA Alum.

The Orientation Stage

Most supervisors will agree that investing time in developing a thorough orientation program pays off many times over during the service year. Taking the time to get acquainted with the VISTAs, helping the VISTAs acclimate to a new community and work environment make the VISTAs more effective and helps the host site use the VISTA's talents more effectively. The following orientation schedule was adapted from material developed by the Maine/New Hampshire/ Vermont Corporation state office and can be used by your organization to create an orientation program for your project.

Sample Orientation Schedule on the next page.

Training Suggestion

"The Right Ingredients: Wisdom from the Field," in **Stone Soup Training Module: Sustaining the AmeriCorps*VISTA Experience**, pages 28-36 in the Facilitator's Guide. In this activity participants see the connection between the host site, workplan and VISTA through lessons from VISTA alumni.

Resource Reading

Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training <http://www.etr.org/nsrc/online_docs.html>

Sample Orientation Schedule

Day 1: Orientation to the Community
- Review of what the VISTAs learned at their pre-service orientation and follow up on any questions they might have or clarification needed
- Review orientation schedule
- Tour of host community and service area
- Leave time to address housing, food, utility and banking needs

Day 2: Orientation to the Sponsoring Organization
- Purpose and goals of host organization
- Organizational chart
- Board structure and composition
- Volunteer involvement with host organization
- Supervision
- Role of VISTA within host organization
- Personnel policies
- Schedule meetings with department heads
- Staff members available to VISTAs
- Host organization resources available to VISTAs

Day 3: VISTA Workplan
- Assignment description
- Past accomplishments/challenges
- Specific problem(s) VISTAs will address
- Goals/objectives of VISTA's workplan
- Strategies/plans for VISTA's assignment
- Description of project balance between short-term and long-term goals
- Training needed to complete workplan and types of training available

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Suggested Goals for a VISTA Orientation

1. Provide background, organization and overall purpose of the sponsoring organization.

2. Provide background of the community and identification of community needs.

3. Outline nature of the low-income population served by the VISTA project.

4. Identify potential resources (funds, materials, people).

5. Review supervisory and support structure for the volunteers.

6. Clarify individual volunteer workplans.

Other helpful meetings to schedule during the first two weeks:
- Host site's board
- Advisory board/mentors
- Clients served by the host organization• National service members who are serving in the community
- VISTA project collaborators

The Acclimation Stage: Months One-Three
During the first three months time should be set aside for VISTAs to develop their workplan. Whether the VISTA is a long-time community members taking on a new role or whether the VISTA has relocated to serve, time to let them build an organizational and community understanding of the project.

The dropout rate for VISTAs is highest during the first three months of service. This attrition can often be prevented if the following four issues are addressed early on in the service year. These issues apply to both the VISTA and the VISTA supervisor.

1. What type of communication style do I have?
2. What type of supervisory style do you have/ need to be successful?
3. What is your motivation for hosting a VISTA/ becoming a VISTA?
4. What kinds of experience, talents and expectations do you bring to the VISTA project?

There are many different ways to address and train on each of these issues. Here are a few training suggestions that supervisors can use during the acclimation stage to address these concerns. The important thing to keep in mind is both the VISTA(s) and VISTA supervisor use the same assessment tool/training/ and participate in the same discussion on the topic. Many supervisors use findings from these assessments to be very useful when re-visioning the workplan and VISTA assignment descriptions.

Training Suggestions

1. **Communication Styles.** Keirsey Temperament Sorter <www.keirsey.com>

2. **Supervisory Styles and Needs.** Leadership Compass, located in Nicole Trimble's **Preparing Our Nation's Leaders Through Service** at <www.nationalservice.org/jobs/fellowships/1999-00.html>

3. **Service Motivation,** located in Nicole Trimble's **Preparing Our Nation's Leaders Through Service** at <www.nationalservice.org/jobs/fellowships/1999-00.html>

4. **Experience, Talents and Expectation**, located in Nicole Trimble's **Preparing Our Nation's Leaders Through Service** at <www.nationalservice.org/jobs/fellowships/1999-00.html>

The Production and Implementation Stage: Service Months Three-Nine

By the middle six months of service a VISTA understands the project and has the training and resources available to implement the workplan objectives. During this period it's helpful if the supervisor can conduct a midyear evaluation of the program as well as schedule a midservice evaluation of the VISTA. Following an evaluation of the project a re-visioning of the workplan and assignment descriptions can be done. Re-visioning a project entails making sure the original goals and objectives are still appropriate for the project as well as making sure the talents and experience a VISTA brings to a host organization are being used to the best advantage. If changes are made to the workplan, make sure to talk with state office staff to amend the official workplan. A midyear evaluation of the VISTA can take place when the second quarterly report is due. Here are some helpful topics to cover during a mid-year evaluation:

1. Are the goals and objectives of the project being met in a timely manner? If so, is the VISTA bored and are additional projects needed to work on? If not, what challenges is the VISTA encountering and what can be done to overcome these challenges?
2. How is the VISTA acclimating to the host organization and community? Does the VISTA need assistance making contacts with certain parts of the community? If so, who might be able to help with this?
3. Are there communication or supervisory issues that need to be addressed?

Supervising a VISTA is different from supervising a staff member. Not in the "Oh it's just a volunteer; you shouldn't give them as much responsibility" way. In our organization our VISTAs have been treated like staff in that they have taken on just as much responsibility as staff members have and have been given the freedom to do that and they've done incredible things because of that. I think when you have a VISTA you have to be more conscious of recognition and support because there are some situations where a VISTA will go out into the community and make a connection with someone, and sometimes when they say they are the VISTA volunteer, they need some staff backing to make things happen in the community because the community might be a little wary of this person who is a volunteer.

~Charise Milton, VISTA Supervisor, Rural California Housing Coalition. VISTA Alum

4. What areas of the project is the VISTA doing well and what areas (project and professional) could the VISTA focus efforts on in the coming six months?
5. What training and resource needs does the VISTA have for the coming six months?
6. What project or supervisory suggestions does the VISTA have for the supervisor or for the project?

Finally, during the implementation stage of the service year it's important for the supervisor to make sure the VISTAs are collecting and organizing project material in a way that will be useful and accessible to future VISTAs and staff members.

The Sustaining Stage: Service Months Nine-Twelve

During the final three months of the service year it's beneficial for a VISTA supervisor to help the VISTA bring closure to both the project and the service experience. As to the project, closure can be achieved by addressing activities discussed in the workplan chapter. For the VISTA, it's helpful to allot time for them to pursue post-service opportunities. As you start to write your third quarterly report, check with the VISTAs to see what their post-service plans are and find out what resources are needed.

> *VISTAs often think they can walk on water and they don't believe you until their feet are wet. Sometimes the risks work and sometimes they don't. This last group of VISTAs was able to get into a school district we were never able to get into. It's letting them try even though in common sense and historically it's not going to get you anywhere. It's overcoming the, "Well we've tried that before and it's never worked. Who knows, they might put a different spin on it and it might work!*
> ~Jeanne Bock, VISTA Supervisor, Panhandle Health, Idaho

This list of VISTAbuses collected from discussions with VISTAs, VISTA supervisors and state office staff is intended as a "learn from my mistakes" reminder for future supervisors.

VISTAbuse

VISTAbuse is the inappropriate use of a VISTA's time and talents and makes for frustrated VISTAs and challenged supervisors. Because the service term of a year is so short, acclimation to the project and the need for a sense of accomplishment can be more intense for a VISTA than for a traditional staff member. It's easy to slip into many of these VISTAbuses when time is short and there are many important assignments to be done. What may seems to be small project or a minor change in the workplan can often become a major obstacle to a VISTA fullfilling their workplan.

Top Ten Most Common VISTAbuses

1. Using the VISTA as an administrative assistant, answering phones, copying, preparing mailings etc.

2. Not having appropriate office space and computer and phone access.

3. Not providing the VISTAs with a clear idea of what the workplan is.

4. Not providing community or organizational orientation.

5. Switching or unclear VISTA supervision.

6. Continually pulling VISTAs into organizational crises.

7. Not having a conversation about the balance between the direct and indirect service portions of the workplan during the first few weeks of service.

8. Not including VISTAs in staff meetings or organizational planning sessions.

9. Assigning projects without providing appropriate orientation and training.

10. Not providing professional or skill development opportunities for the VISTA.

Suggestions for Supervisors

On a more positive note, most former VISTA supervisors will tell you that working with VISTAs is stimulating, challenging, enlightening, frustrating, and, ultimately, a rewarding experience. When asked to define a sustainable project, many supervisors said, "It's when we can find the money to hire the VISTA at the end of the service term."

Provided with the right environment and resources, a VISTA can bring the energy, talent and commitment needed to address formidable community development projects. Below are some final pearls of wisdom from VISTA supervisors on how to take good care of your VISTAs.

• Be prepared to spend at least a quarter of your time during the first two months of the VISTA's arrival working on VISTA-related work. The time invested in the first few months pays off tenfold later on in the service term when the VISTAs can work autonomously and are able to tackle big projects.

• Find a supervisor for the VISTAs who can appreciate the need for flexibility and keeping the VISTAs "on a loose string."

• Identify programs that can help your VISTA with basic needs (food, housing, childcare, utility expenses). By helping address the VISTA's personal needs you will increase their project productivity and show sensitivity to the financial situation of the VISTAs that will be greatly appreciated.

• Take time to recognize work accomplished by a VISTA. For example, one VISTA project started a "Take a VISTA to Lunch" day where once a month a

Resource Reading

A Manager's Guide to Communication by the Corporation for National Service available at <www.etr.org/nsrc/online_docs.html>

Becoming a Better Supervisor: A Resource Guide for Community Service Supervisors by the Corporation for National Service available at <www.etr.org/nsrc/online_docs.html>

Practical Applications: Strategies for Supporting a Diverse Corps by the National Association for Conflict Mediation.
Available through the National Service Resource Library:
ETR Associates
Phone: 800-860-2684
<www.etr.org/NSRC>

different staff member would buy the VISTA lunch and find out more about their work.

- Let others know the fine work that your VISTAs are doing. Whether it's a letter to the editor, a commendation from your board or a letter to the VISTA's family letting them know the impact their work is having on the community—share the successes with others.
- Keep in touch with your VISTAs after the end of the service year, put them on your mailing list, invite them to serve on a committee, etc. VISTA alumni are a great spokespeople and fundraisers for their programs.

Most of these are very simple gestures that go a long way to make the VISTA feel safe, productive and appreciated by their host site and community.

> *Here's my advice on supervising VISTAs: Feed 'em, love 'em and leave 'em alone—kind of the Dr. Spock approach to VISTA management. If you are doing it right the VISTAs need facilitation and guidance. You are responsible for painting them the big picture, firing them up and sending them out to do great work…but remember you do need to feed them, they are hungry ALL of the time.*
> ~Virginia Lang, VISTA Supervisor, Communities in Schools. Oklahoma

Putting It All Together

With strong community and organizational commitment to the VISTA project, a clear workplan and VISTAs who have the training and resources to accomplish the project goals, a sustainable project is achievable and long-term social change a reality.

The path to a sustainable project is long and has many turns. The destination you originally chose for the project may be very different than where you wind up. A successful, sustainable project is going to shift to the changing needs of the service population it addresses, the funding environment and collaboration opportunities. Goals and objectives can be modified to accommodate these changes and a project will flourish when there is clear communication and a shared vision on the part of the VISTA, host site, the community and the state office. Hopefully the guide has provided you with helpful information about program development to create this vision and you now have a clearer sense of how to develop and implement a sustainable project. For more information about sustainability, managing a national service project or community development issues, please review the Resource Material section that follows.

Good luck with your project!

The VISTAs gave us new ideals and a new perspective; a bigger perspective and that was what we needed.

~Brenda Takeshore, VISTA Supervisor, Bureau of Land Management, Alaska

Resource Reading

Tool Kit: A User's Guide to Evaluation for National Service Program
Available through the National Service Resource Library:
ETR Associates
Phone: 800-860-2684
<http://www.etr.org/NSRC>

A8-36

On Line Sustainability Resources

Sustainable Seattle: <www.scn.org/sustainable/susthome.html> Listing of policies, how Seattle has organized volunteers, 1998 Sustainable Community Indicators Report, and project descriptions (Neighborhood Network Team, Policy Group, and the Seattle Guide to Sustainable Living).

Center of Excellence for Sustainable Development: <www.sustainable.doe.gov/> Site has case studies, rural and urban specific sustainability information, funding opportunities and houses toolkits for the following topics: Land Use Planning, Green Buildings, Transportation Economics, Industry, Disaster Planning, Community Development

United States Environmental Protection Agency Funding Page: <http://134.67.55.16:7777/DC/OSECWeb.nsf/Grants?OpenView> Comprehensive listing of foundation and governmental funding opportunities for sustainable community development. Very helpful writing tutorial included in site.

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation: <www.wilder.org/pubs/pubcatlg.html> A series of community collaboration and community building, leadership development and marketing and fundraising publications available: A sampling of their titles: Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, Organizing for Social Change, Leadership, Management, and Planning: All the Way to the Bank: Smart Money Management for Tomorrow's Nonprofit, Consulting with Nonprofits: A Practitioner's Guide, Coping with Cutbacks: The Nonprofit Guide to Success When Times Are Tight, Marketing Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations Volume I: Develop the Plan, Wilder Nonprofit Field Guide to Conducting Successful Focus Groups, Wilder Nonprofit Field Guide to Getting Started on the Internet.

The Asset-Based Community Development Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University: <http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/abcd.html#AA> Guide to Mapping and Mobilizing the Economic Capacities of Local Residents (1996), A Guide to Mapping Local Business Assets and Mobilizing Local Business Capacities (1996), A Guide to Mapping Consumer Expenditures and Mobilizing Consumer Expenditure Capacities (1996), A Guide to Capacity Inventories: Mobilizing the Community Skills of Local Residents (1997), A Guide to Evaluating Asset-Based Community Development: Lessons, Challenges, and Opportunities (1997), A Guide to Creating a Neighborhood Information Exchange: Building Communities by Connecting Local Skills, and Knowledge (1998), City-Sponsored Community Building: Savannah's Grants for Blocks Story (1998), Newspapers and Neighborhoods: Strategies for Achieving Responsible Coverage of Local Communities (1999).

Sustainable Communities Network: <www.sustainable.org> Site provides a listing of sustainable development funding sources, case studies, publications on the following topics: Smart Growth, Governing Sustainability, Civic Engagement, and Community Indicators.

Center for Livable Communities:<www.lgc.org/clc/**>** Hotline and Referral Help 1800-290-8202

Civic Practices Network: <www.cpn.org/index.html**>** Civic Practices Network (CPN) Center for Human Resources, Heller School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare/Brandeis University/ 60 Turner Street/Waltham, MA 02154/ Phone: (617) 736-4890. *Community Manuals* (i.e.: Community Building in Public Housing: The Ties that Bind People and their Communities, Planning Community-Wide Study Circle Programs: A Step-by-Step Guide, The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide: Violence in Our Communities, Building Communities From The Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets, The Community Visioning and Strategic Planning Handbook)

Environmental Manuals, Networking Manuals, Family, Gender and Children's Manuals, Work and Empowerment Manuals, and Youth Education Manuals.

National Town Meeting for a Sustainable America: <www.sustainableusa.org/> Some interesting best practices profiles on youth, environmental and housing programs.

Community Research network (Loka Institute): <www.loka.org/crn/index.htm> Great linking page for a variety of social issues ranging from health to the environment to agricultural issues. Also, the site houses a comprehensive issue database and listing of funding sources.

Kellogg collection of community development resources: <www.unl.edu/kellogg/index.html> A comprehensive database of community development guidebooks, manuals, workshop materials, reports, books, and videos. Useful for rural, urban, and suburban topics.

National Service Resources

Because some of the training and technical assistance providers change over the years, it's helpful to consult the following site for an up-to-date listing of providers: at <www.etr.org/nsrc/resguide/rgtoc.html>

National Service Resource Center (NSRC)
ETR Associates
P.O. Box 1830
Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830
Phone 1 (800.)321-4407 (6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PST).
Fax 1 (800) 435-8433
Website: <www.etr.org>

Disability Issues
United Cerebral Palsy Associations/ Access AmeriCorps
1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: 202-785-3891
Fax: 202-296-0349
E-mail: <info@nonprofitrisk.org>
Website: <www.nonprofitrisk.org>

Evaluation Assistance
Aguirre International/Project STAR (Support and Training for Assessing Results)
480 East 4th Ave., Unit A
San Mateo, CA 94401
Telephone: 800-548-3656
Fax: 650-348-0261
E-mail: <star@aiweb.com>
Website: <www.projectstar.org>

Human Relations and Diversity

CHP International

1040 North Blvd., Suite 220

Oak Park, IL 60301

Telephone: 800-635-6675 or 708-848-9650

Fax: 708-848-3191

Website: <www.chpinternational.com/DIVERSE.html>

Leadership Training

National Service Leadership Institute

Bldg. 386, Moraga Ave.

P.O. Box 29995

Presidio of San Francisco, CA 94129

Telephone: 415-561-5950

Fax: 415-561-5955

Organizational Development and Program Management

United Way of America

701 North Fairfax Street

Alexandria, VA 22314-2045

Telephone: 703-836-7100, ext. 436

Fax: 703-549-9152

Website: <www.unitedway.org>

Supervisory Skill Training

National Crime Prevention Council

1700 K Street, NW, 2nd Floor

Washington, DC 20006-3817

Telephone: 800-355-1200 /202-466-6272

Fax: 202-785-0698

Website: <www.ncpc.org/amicorps.htm>

Sustainability

Campaign Consultation

2817 St. Paul Street

Baltimore, MD 21218

Telephone: 410-243-7979

Fax: 410-243-1024

Website: <sustainability@campaignconsultation.com>

Stone Soup Sustainability:

Workbook

Acknowledgments

Corporation for National Service
Created in 1993, the Corporation for National Service oversees three national service initiatives—AmeriCorps, which includes AmeriCorps*VISTA, AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps, and hundreds of local and national nonprofits; Learn and Serve America, which provides models and assistance to help teachers integrate service and learning from kindergarten through college; and the National Senior Service Corps, which includes the Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

National Service Fellowship Program
The National Service Fellowship Program, launched by the Corporation for National Service in September 1997, involves a team of individual researchers who develop and promote models of quality service responsive to the needs of communities. The goal of the program is to strengthen national service through continuous learning, new models, strong networks, and professional growth.

What's in the Cupboard: Table of Contents

The Story of Stone Soup

A hungry peddler comes upon a town in famine. While looking for a place to have dinner the peddler meets up with the town blacksmith. When the peddler asks where he might partake in a meal, the blacksmith said "You'll find no food here, all the townspeople have hoarded their food and will not share with one another, especially not a stranger." To this the peddler declared that he had all the ingredients for a wonderful meal and that he would cook for the famine-ridden town. The peddler asked if he could borrow a kettle from the blacksmith and began to build a fire. When the blacksmith returned with the kettle they filled it with water and waited for it to boil. When the water began to boil the peddler reached deep into his coat pocket and pulled out a simple stone. He dropped the stone into the kettle of boiling water and leaned over the kettle and sniffed the air, licked his lips and declared that this was to be one of the best batches of stone soup he ever made. The townspeople began to gather around the kettle to see what this peddler was cooking up. Curiosity and hunger broke the silence of one townsman who said, "Stone soup is good, but it's even better with potatoes." Another villager shouted out, "What you really needed are quality carrots." And with that the villagers went to their respective homes, brought out the best food in their cabinets and dropped it in the pot. After all of the villagers had eaten the marvelous stone soup, they offered to purchase the stone. The peddler replied that he couldn't take money for the stone and left it for the townspeople. Years after the famine had passed, villagers could still be heard bragging about how wonderful their community's stone soup was.

~Old Russian Folk Tale

Welcome

The peddler in "Stone Soup" is much like a the role a VISTA plays in the community. Using only a stone, the peddler organizes the community and helps them figure out a way to end their hunger. Similar to the peddler, VISTAs have a wonderful ability to inspire their communities to share the best they have to offer. For thirty-five years VISTAs have been mobilizing communities across the Untied States to make important changes. The goal of a VISTA's work is to create a project that empowers a community to take action on difficult issues and establish a project that will last long after the last VISTA has left . Sustainability is a challenge that begins the first day, of a project and how is can be achieved is a question that should be asked daily. This workbook was developed to help VISTA create sustainable projects.

The workbook was developed to help VISTAs organize project material so that it can be passed on to their successor. The workbook is a series of checklists to help VISTAs collect and organize project material; it was designed for a three-ring binder. The checklists provide general suggestions of helpful information to gather, and VISTAs are encouraged to supplement this with project and community-specific information. By capturing the suggested project material and sharing thoughts on how the project and VISTA experience can be changed, VISTAs can increase the chances for a sustainable project. The workbook also includes some suggestions and reflections from VISTA alumni. These sections are meant to give a sense of the important work VISTAs have accomplished in the past as well as the legacy their service experience has had upon them both personally and professionally.

Throughout the workbook you'll see "resource material." All of the publications mentioned in the workbook are available through National Service Resource Center (NSRC) administered by ETR Associates.

ETR Associates
P.O. Box 1830
Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830
Phone: 800-860-2684
Fax: 831-430-9471
www.etr.org/NSRC

The workbook is part of the *Stone Soup Sustainability Series* developed for the AmeriCorps*VISTA community. There are two other resource pieces in the series: **Stone Soup: How to Sustain the AmeriCorps*VISTA Experience** and **Stone Soup Sustainability: A Supervisor's Guide to Developing AmeriCorps*VISTA Workplans.** The training manual is a compilation of training activities designed to help the AmeriCorps*VISTA community increase their awareness of sustainabilit. The guidebook was designed to follow an AmeriCorps*VISTA project from its beginning stages through its final grant year ,provides supervisors with the checklists, timelines and sample project material to help create, implement and sustain a AmeriCorps*VISTA project.

I hope you find this workbook useful and that it helps you create sustainable community development projects. Good Luck!

~Amy Bonn, National Service Fellow. VISTA Alum

Host Organization Information

The following is a list of material that will help you get to know your host organization. As you develop project material during your service year, think about what information might be useful to future VISTAs.

- Organizational chart

- Annual report

- Mission statement

- Brochures/pamphlets on specific projects

> *One thing you need to do early on is make contact, establish a relationship with what we now call community gatekeepers; these are the important people in the community. There are the county agency people who at least had the potential to make my job easier and there were community leaders ranging from some black farmers who had some influence to the county funeral director. It's important to get in touch with them and sit down with all of them and get their views and make it clear that you're there to learn from them and not to tell them what to do. This is learning the community's ecology; it's knowing where people go to meet, where they hang out, where they go to school, where they go to church, how they interact with each other, that sort of thing.*
> ~Dr. Daniel Blumenthal. Director of Community Medicine. Moorehouse School of Medicine, VISTA Alum

Resource Material

QuickSilver: Adventure Games, Initiative Problems, Trust Activities and a Guide to Effective Leadership by Karl Rohnke and Steve Butler

Curing Terminal Niceness: Building Healthy Volunteer/ Staff Relationships by Marilyn MacKenzie

Available through the National Service Resource Library:
ETR Associates
Phone: 800-860-2684
<www.etr.org/NSRC>

Community Information

Here's a good spot to put information about your host community. Collect information that will give others a sense of the area's history and why the VISTA project is needed.

- Chamber of Commerce publications

- United Way resource book

- Material from host community's historical society

- Census data <www.census.gov> Enter the zip code(s) of your service area you can download helpful demographic data

- A map of the community including an outline of the host site's service area

- List of where to post flyers

- List of community gathering places (post office, diner, school sporting events etc.)

> *On serving in a community very different from the one he grew up in:*
> *First of all, we were kids and we didn't know their culture. We didn't know anything about them. Who are we to go and help these people? What were we doing there? I'm not sure that the community knew but they treated us with incredible respect and with love.*
> ~ Ray Magliozzi, Co-host of the radio show "Car Talk", VISTA Alum.

Project Material

As the project progresses be sure to include a copy of all major documents in this section.

- Project application
- Workplan
- Job description
- Quarterly reports
- Recruitment flyers
- Newsletters
- Contact information about state and national recruitment assistance
- Project numbers (number of people served, number of volunteer hours, etc.)

It's a VISTA's chore not to come there and be employees but to carve a way for people who are gonna be left there. Carve a path for them. Help them do that, help enable them. And in the process you're going to get so much more out of it than you ever gave.
~ Wisconsin State Senator Gwendolyn Moore from Milwaukee. VISTA Alum.

Resource Material

The National Service Resource Library has a series of on line documents including job descriptions, mission statements, policies and press releases. This material can be accessed through their website at <www.etr.org/nsrc/forms/index.html>

Getting Started - A Guide for AmeriCorps Members

Principles to High Quality National Service Programs by the Corporation for National Service

Available through the National Service Resource Library:
ETR Associates
Phone: 800-860-2684
<www.etr.org/NSRC>

For me, and probably for the other VISTAs too, VISTA is more than just a thing that you did, it was an experience. It was philosophical. It was spiritual. It was a whole bunch of those other things that made it so important to folks and that's what made it fun as well as rewarding; I think that that's an important element. Another important element is that you really have to work to make it fun. I saw a number of VISTAs who didn't have enough of a sense of humor about life in general I guess. Because you're working, in very difficult and challenging environments you're seeing and being exposed to things that aren't the way it's supposed to but if you can't get some sense of humor about it will just suck you dry.
~ Peter Waite, President of Laubach Literacy International, VISTA Alum

Community Contacts

Here's the place to list all the helpful project people you've been working with. On the attached sheet please list the people who have been most helpful to you in your project.

• Advisory board/mentors for the project

• Government contacts

• Helpful nonprofit staff members

• Trainers

• Heads of local civic organizations

• School contacts

Sustainability is what you build in the community. I mean that's where your work may live on if it's valuable. If it's valid people buy into to your work and they help get the project started. The important thing is to engage with the community not to be separate from it.
~Tom Flemming, Corporation for National Service. VISTA Alum.

Contact List

Name	Phone Number	Email	Address	Helped with what Project(s)	Notes

A9-11

Volunteer Development

What are some effective strategies you have used to recruit volunteers? Where have you gone to recruit? How have you trained? This is the section where you should record your ideas for volunteer development.

• List of volunteers and their contact information

• How you contact volunteers (by phone, email, mail)

• List of activities volunteers helped with

• Recruitment material (newspaper announcements, posters)

• Training schedules and agendas you've used for volunteer training

• How you think volunteers could help in the future

• Types of volunteers you are looking for (accountant, someone with computer skills, someone who has a background in education, etc.)

VISTA emboldened us to go out and do things that you would never do. I'm normally very quiet and very shy but in order to get things that you had to go and speak in front of large numbers of people and present your case. I would be shaking in my boots but I knew I had to stay on top of it to get my point across in order to get the help that I needed for the community.
~Monique Magliozzi, VISTA Alum.

Resource Material

Volunteer Management Handbook for Effective Development of Volunteer Programs by Ann Jacobson.

Volunteer Development Toolbox by Marilyn MacKenzie and Gail Moore.

The Resource Connection: The Newsletter of the National Service Resource Center <www.etr.org/nsrc/newsletter.html>

Available through the National Service Resource Library:
ETR Associates
Phone: 800-860-2684
<www.etr.org/NSRC>

Grants and Funding Opportunities

It's helpful to put all of the funding material in one spot. Take some time to write down on the attaced sheet helpful resources, contact people and events and grants that you would recommend pursuing in the coming year.

• Contact information of donors

• Names and application copies of grants you applied for. If you received the grant what type of reporting expectations does the funder have? If you didn't' get the grant did you receive any feedback about why not and how might this affect future applications for this grant?

• Names and contact information for foundations you've approached

• Description and event material for fundraising events held and suggestions for future events

• Letters of support for grants

• Membership material (solicitation letter, thank you letter)

• People who helped develop the grant, reviewers, experts in a particular fields, etc.

The skills I use now to pull together multimillion dollar projects, when we have opportunities to do that, are the same ones that I was using back in 1972 to pull together money for my VISTA project. As a VISTA I was asking for a hundred dollars here and a hundred dollars there and a school bus and a dump truck and paint; it's still the same skill set I use today.
~Peter Waite, President of Laubauch Literacy International. VISTA Alum

Grant and Funding Opportunities

Name of Grant/Funding Opportunity	Contact Person	Phone Number	Address	Due Date	Notes

A9-14

Training Opportunities

What local and regional resources are there to help build the skills of VISTAs? In this section of the workbook write down classes, workshops and trainings that would be helpful to future VISTAs.

• National Service training opportunities

• Names and contact information of people in the community who have expertise in helpful areas

• Online opportunities

• Scholarship opportunities for training

•Local training suggestions (college, training sponsored by another organization)

The things on my VISTA project that I thought were a pain in the butt would always turn out the other way. It's changed my whole perspective on life because I'm always saying there's a light in this somewhere I just don't know where it is right now. It always happens. Always.
~Barbara Niess, Corporation for National Service Staff. VISTA Alum.

Training Opportunities

Name of Training	Topics Covered in Training	Training Date	Contact Person	Phone Number	Notes

Communication

This is the who, what, when and where section of the workbook. Who did you talk with during your service year? What material did you develop for them? When is a good time to contact them? How would you suggest other VISTAs work with them?

- Contact names and numbers of local radio, television stations and newspapers.

- Press releases

- Newspaper articles

- Letters (to funders, to volunteers, thank you notes, etc.)

What I remember from VISTA was the courage, accomplishments and heroic efforts made by so many people who did not have the advantage of education, money or influence. My experience defied all of the stereotypes my generation was brought up with around welfare, welfare recipients, race, and poverty. I was a twenty-year-old, red headed, freckle faced, southern white boy from southeast Virginia when I entered VISTA in 1966. I trained in the southeast Bronx (NYC) and was then assigned to United South End Settlements in Boston.
~Norman Olshansky, VISTA Alum.

Advice to Fellow VISTAs
Listen

Visit

Commit one random act of beauty or kindness a day

Write down one word that encapsulates the day in a journal

Fast once a week (put savings in a jar)

Take photographs.

Write one note of appreciation a week.

~Shayne DelCohen,. Writer. VISTA Alum.

Resource Material

Accessing the Media produced by ACTA Publications (video)

A Guide to Working with the Media by the Corporation for National Service

Available through the National Service Resource Library:
ETR Associates
Phone: 800-860-2684
<www.etr.org/NSRC>

Transition Information

This is the place to list all of the things that you think would make life easier for the incoming VISTA or staff member. Project recommendations, orientation suggestions as well as how and why the project has changed over the past year is really helpful information to share.

• Letter of introduction from departing AmeriCorps*VISTA introducing new AmeriCorps*VISTA to the community.

• List of what needs to be done on specific projects

• What's changed in the project?

• What you would be doing if you were staying on
  _ Orientation suggestions

• Location of files on the computer
  _ Contact information for the VISTAs who have served on the project

Resource Material

AmeriCorps Alums' website has a listing of job opportunities and networking suggestions. You can reach their website at <www.americorpsalums.org>

Life After AmeriCorps by the Corporation for National Service Available through the National Service Resource Library:
ETR Associates
Phone: 800-860-2684
<www.etr.org/NSRC>

Connection The Newsletter of the National Service Resource Center Volume 3, Number 1 * Summer 1997. Newsletter Theme: Next Steps Preparing Members for Life After AmeriCorps <www.etr.org/nsrc/newsletter.html>

One of my favorite quotes is a Chinese proverb that I think relates well to VISTA service, "One generation must plant the tree in order for the next to enjoy its shade." Often, it's difficult to see the change we are effecting in our communities; the instant, visible satisfaction of helping others often does not exist in our service. VISTA's work for long-term change. This can be disheartening, especially around the middle of our service year. It's hard to continue under the conditions under which we serve without receiving some sort of intrinsic reward, to actually see that we are making a difference. This is the time when it is important to remember the 'trees' we are planting in our communities, to focus on the big picture and larger goals of our projects, and to remember how we as individuals fit into this picture. Like trees, the changes we are effecting will take years to reach their potential, to provide the 'shade' to those we are serving. We are doing more to change our collective communities than we'll ever know; the positive actions we are taking now ripple-out into our communities and touch countless numbers of people, spreading out over numerous years. The service we are each doing is important. If we want to create shade, we can't wait for the next generation to plant the trees. We have to start now. VISTA service gives us the means to do so.
~Jarron Paronto, AmeriCorps*VISTA Leader Bridging the Gap, Kansas City, Missouri

Reflections and Suggestions

Here's an opportunity for you to share some practical as well philosophical things you've learned from your VISTA experience.

• List of housing suggestions

• Doctors you used

• List of where to go for inexpensive food

• Programs that provide benefits to low-income people (i.e. utilities, scholarships for kids)

• Suggestions for social and recreational activities

• Names and phone numbers of local alumni or current AmeriCorps members

• What you learned from your service experience and what you would do differently

• Thoughts on the host community and host organization

• How you've changed as a result of your service experience

• Book and movie suggestions

Suggested Reading List

National Service and AmeriCorps by Allan Metz

AmeriCorps: Serve Your Country and Pay for College by Conway Greene

The Call of Service: A Witness to Idealism by Robert Coles

The Bill: How the Adventures of Clinton's National Service Bill Reveal What Is Corrupt, Comic, Cynical, and Noble About Washington by Steven Waldman

In Service to America: A History of VISTA in Arkansas 1965-1985 by Marvin Schwartz

The Cathedral Within: Transforming Your Life by Giving Something Back by Bill Shore

The Milagro Beanfield War by John Nichols

She's Come Undone by Wally Lamb

The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination by Robert Coles

Rules for Radicals by Saul Alinsky

How People Get Power by Si Kahn

When I arrived for work the day after my PSO, I was shown to a practically empty room with just some chairs, a desk, a phone, and a computer. I was informed that the woman who would be acting as my supervisor was only part-time and would focus only on fundraising. My charge was to do everything else involved in the creation of a new family center in a low-income neighborhood of Seattle. So I sat down at the desk, pulled out a piece of paper, and started a list of things to do. 1. Buy a sign for the window. 2. Think of some activities to start up next month. 3. Find some families. And so the Cascade Family Center was started.

~Lisa Meierotto, AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps*VISTA Leader Cascade Family Center, Seattle, Washington and the Enterprise Foundation in New York City

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United Cerebral Palsy Associations/ Access AmeriCorps
1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: 202-785-3891
Fax: 202-296-0349
E-mail: <info@nonprofitrisk.org>
Website: <www.nonprofitrisk.org>

Evaluation Assistance
Aguirre International/Project STAR (Support and Training for Assessing Results)
480 East 4th Ave., Unit A
San Mateo, CA 94401
Telephone: 800-548-3656
Fax: 650-348-0261
E-mail: <star@aiweb.com>
Website: <www.projectstar.org>

Human Relations and Diversity

CHP International

1040 North Blvd., Suite 220

Oak Park, IL 60301

Telephone: 800-635-6675 or 708-848-9650

Fax: 708-848-3191

Website: <www.chpinternational.com/DIVERSE.html>

Leadership Training

National Service Leadership Institute

Bldg. 386, Moraga Ave.

P.O. Box 29995

Presidio of San Francisco, CA 94129

Telephone: 415-561-5950

Fax: 415-561-5955

Organizational Development and Program Management

United Way of America

701 North Fairfax Street

Alexandria, VA 22314-2045

Telephone: 703-836-7100, ext. 436

Fax: 703-549-9152

Website: <www.unitedway.org>

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Sustainability

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Baltimore, MD 21218

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Fax: 410-243-1024

Website: <sustainability@campaignconsultation.com>

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United States Environmental Protection Agency Funding Page: <http://134.67.55.16:7777/DC/OSECWeb.nsf/Grants?OpenView> Comprehensive listing of foundation and governmental funding opportunities for sustainable community development. Very helpful writing tutorial included in site.

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation: <www.wilder.org/pubs/pubcatlg.html> A series of community collaboration and community building, leadership development and marketing and fundraising publications available: A sampling of their titles: Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, Organizing for Social Change, Leadership, Management, and Planning: All the Way to the Bank: Smart Money Management for Tomorrow's Nonprofit, Consulting with Nonprofits: A Practitioner's Guide, Coping with Cutbacks: The Nonprofit Guide to Success When Times Are Tight, Marketing Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations Volume I: Develop the Plan, Wilder Nonprofit Field Guide to Conducting Successful Focus Groups, Wilder Nonprofit Field Guide to Getting Started on the Internet.

The Asset-Based Community Development Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University: <http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/abcd.html#AA> Guide to Mapping and Mobilizing the Economic Capacities of Local Residents (1996), A Guide to Mapping Local Business Assets and Mobilizing Local Business Capacities (1996), A Guide to Mapping Consumer Expenditures and Mobilizing Consumer Expenditure Capacities (1996), A Guide to Capacity Inventories: Mobilizing the Community Skills of Local Residents (1997), A Guide to Evaluating Asset-Based Community Development: Lessons, Challenges, and Opportunities (1997), A Guide to Creating a Neighborhood Information Exchange: Building Communities by Connecting Local Skills, and Knowledge (1998), City-Sponsored Community Building: Savannah's Grants for Blocks Story (1998), Newspapers and Neighborhoods: Strategies for Achieving Responsible Coverage of Local Communities (1999).

Sustainable Communities Network: <www.sustainable.org> Site provides a listing of sustainable development funding sources, case studies, publications on the following topics: Smart Growth, Governing Sustainability, Civic Engagement, and Community Indicators.

Center for Livable Communities:<www.lgc.org/clc/**>** Hotline and Referral Help 1800-290-8202

Civic Practices Network: <www.cpn.org/index.html**>** Civic Practices Network (CPN) Center for Human Resources, Heller School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare/Brandeis University/ 60 Turner Street/Waltham, MA 02154/ Phone: (617) 736-4890. *Community Manuals* (i.e.: Community Building in Public Housing: The Ties that Bind People and their Communities, Planning Community-Wide Study Circle Programs: A Step-by-Step Guide, The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide: Violence in Our Communities, Building Communities From The Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets, The Community Visioning and Strategic Planning Handbook)

Environmental Manuals, Networking Manuals, Family, Gender and Children's Manuals, Work and Empowerment Manuals, and Youth Education Manuals.

National Town Meeting for a Sustainable America: <www.sustainableusa.org/> Some interesting best practices profiles on youth, environmental and housing programs.

Community Research network (Loka Institute): <www.loka.org/crn/index.htm> Great linking page for a variety of social issues ranging from health to the environment to agricultural issues. Also, the site houses a comprehensive issue database and listing of funding sources.

Kellogg collection of community development resources: <www.unl.edu/ kellogg/index.html> A comprehensive database of community development guidebooks, manuals, workshop materials, reports, books, and videos. Useful for rural, urban, and suburban topics.

Go to the People,
Live with them,
Learn from then,
Love them.
Start with what they know,
Build with what they have.

And with the best leaders
When the work is done
the task accomplished
The people will say,
"We have done this ourselves."

~Lao Tse